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By George Santayana

THE IDEA OF CHRIST IN THE GOSPELS OR GOD IN MAN
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THE MIDDLE SPAN: VOLUME TWO OF PERSONS AND PLACES
REALMS OF BEING

THE REALM OF SPIRIT

THE REALM OF TRUTH

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LITTLE ESSAYS DRAWN FROM THE WORKS OF GEORGE SANTAYANA

By Logan Pearsall Smith, *with the collaboration of the author.*

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THE IDEA OF CHRIST IN THE GOSPELS
OR GOD IN MAN

THE IDEA OF CHRIST
IN THE GOSPELS
OR GOD IN MAN

A CRITICAL ESSAY
BY GEORGE SANTAYANA

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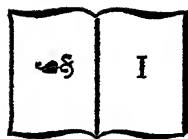
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PART FIRST
THE IDEA OF CHRIST
IN THE GOSPELS



INSPIRATION

Many a "Life of Jesus" has been composed in the effort to recast the narratives in the four Gospels into one consecutive and credible history. For a believer, if he were greatly inspired, such an undertaking might be legitimate; yet it would be hardly required, since the narratives, though independent, fall together of themselves, in the pious mind, into a total and impressive picture. The history of Christian faith and of Christian art sufficiently proves it. But this presupposes an innocent state of mind that accepts every detail, no matter how miraculous, with unhesitating joy, and is ready sympathetically to piece out the blanks in the story, and to imagine ever more vividly how everything must have happened. So every orthodox preacher does in his glowing sermons, and every devout soul in its meditations.

If, however, the would-be biographer of Jesus is a cool critic, with no religious assumptions, his labours will be entirely wasted, because he has mistaken the character of his texts. The Gospels are not historical works but products of inspiration. They are summonses and prophecies, announcing the end of this world, or at least of the present era, and prescribing the means by which individual souls may escape destruction, and enter into a Kingdom of Heaven which is at hand. Essentially, then, the Gospels are prophetic; they bring "glad tidings"; yet they are not written by the prophets themselves, but gathered together a generation or

two later from oral tradition or from the inspirations of the Apostles and of anonymous believers through whom the spirit had not ceased to speak: nor is it excluded that the Evangelists themselves should have had original inspirations. In the Gospels, the unction, the freshness, the life-like details in many places are so many proofs of their poetic source. The writer is telling of something now standing before his eyes, of which his heart is full. He is not collecting reports, he is not remembering events that he himself has ever witnessed. If he overhears those discourses, it is by telepathy; if he sees those scenes, it is in a vision; if he knows those truths, it is by faith.

Nor are the Gospels less inspired in their plot than in their message. If in original purpose they are works of propaganda and edification, in method of composition they are religious epics. Action in them is preordained in heaven, and prompted by angels and devils; and events happen that ancient prophecies may be fulfilled. Facts and thoughts are everywhere reported without evidence, and often without even a possible witness, as by the omniscience of a novelist. Not that the writers are indifferent to truth or doubt that they see it. On the contrary, they are moved by a religious passion to proclaim and to propagate the truth, with a zeal entirely foreign to the profane historian. But their criterion of truth is not evidence or probability: it is congruity with the faith, fittingness, significance, edification. Things have been ordered by God as it is beautiful that they should be ordered; and it is on this ground that true reports are to be distinguished from false ones. These things are not loose facts: they are parts of a revelation.

This is not to say that an inspired writer may never report anything that is historically true. The *Iliad* is an epic and the Muse is expressly invoked to inspire it; yet what can inspiration do, but reburnish and marshal more grandly images that had real occasions and therefore could not lack some indicative truth? And the deeper the passion that selects and transmutes those images, the truer the picture becomes to the heart. Achilles might have been purely

imaginary and as little historical as Prometheus; yet he probably was real; for we are now led to believe, on other evidence, that there was really a Trojan war, an Agamemnon, and why not an Achilles also? But when we read that his mother was a sea-goddess and that Pallas Athena pulled his yellow hair, to check his rashness, we perceive that we are in the realm of myth or of allegory, and that there is no knowing how much foundation in fact there may be in such fables. In any case, this is not what matters in the Iliad. It is the mind of Homer, the young soul of Greece, the courage and pathos of human life in its essence that we look for here, and that we find. A professor that should profess to produce a critical life of Achilles would make us laugh.

Why have we not laughed from the beginning at any rationalist or rationalising "Life of Jesus"? Because neither the author nor the public were really emancipated from the magic of Christian faith. They were Protestants or free-thinking Catholics, and they retained unwittingly, if not avowedly, a substantial residue of trust in inspiration, either in the literal and verbal infallibility of the Bible, or in the amiable figure of Jesus, conversing with his disciples or with Mary Magdalene or laying his hands on little children's heads. Sensibility, which would have been a virtue in them as literary critics, became the cause of an enormous blunder of theirs as historians. For a sympathetic humanist and unprejudiced man of letters, there is no more reason for swearing by the letter of the Gospels than by that of Homer or the Upanishads or the Koran. We may prefer the spirit of one or another, but the moral beauty in them all is equally natural, equally human; and nothing but custom or a mystical conversion can lead us to regard the inspiration in one case only as miraculous, and a revealed mirror of the exact truth.

I know of only one critic, and he the earliest, who has radically escaped this snare by virtue of exceptional isolation and exceptional genius. "The Jews," writes Spinoza (who was one of them), "if they make money by a transaction, say God gave it to them; if they

desire anything they say God has disposed their hearts towards it; and if they think anything they say God has told them." Here is inspiration stripped of all verbal drapery and seen *in puris naturalibus*. No less penetrating and radical is Spinoza concerning Christ. He wrote, however, in the midst of the blindest theological controversies and rival fanaticisms; and sometimes he ironically adapted his language to the cant of his time. So the word "salvation," in the following passage, must be taken in a double sense, one for his readers, another for his secret mind. "It is not in the least needful for salvation"—he privately meant needful for a happy life—"to know Christ according to the flesh; but concerning that so-called eternal Son of God (*de aeterno illo Dei filio*), that is, God's eternal wisdom, which is manifested in all things, and chiefly in the mind of man, and most particularly in Christ Jesus, the case is far otherwise. For without this no man can arrive at a state of blessedness, inasmuch as nothing else can teach him what is true or false, what is good or evil." The historical Jesus and the ideal Christ are here distinguished clearly, and seen in their respective nakedness. That which Spinoza ignored, not having the tradition or the culture required to understand it, was precisely that idea of God-in-man, that religious image of Christ evoked in the Gospels and living in the Christian mind, which is my subject. Spinoza was not a poet by nature, and fate had not caused him to be born a Christian. If consequently he escaped illusion in one direction, he missed insight in another.

What is inspiration? We see in the Gospels that madmen were conceived to be possessed by devils; and antiquity in general regarded originality or genius in mankind as something infused by a magic spell, by the Muses, or by the spirit of some God; and this was not merely a way of speaking, but an intimate experience; because the natural man never feels more passive, or more at a loss to explain his performance, than when he has a brilliant thought or does impulsively some unexpectedly heroic or shameful action. Nevertheless, everybody knows that certain spots and seasons, cer-

tain practices and attitudes are favourable to grace; that spring and wine provoke inspiration in poets and lovers, though it be inspiration of a generic and common kind; and that the wilder inspiration produced by opiates and toxic gases, as well as that of spiritualist mediums, shows a strange mixture of dreamlike incoherence with bits of supernormal perception and prophecy.

It would appear from all this that the graphic and persuasive force of inspiration, although circumstances may be propitious for it, as they may be propitious for the development of a seed, does not invade us from outside, but on the contrary springs from an innate poetic fertility and suppressed dreamfulness in the psyche. The occasion and the ambient influences merely vivify the spirit, by stimulating the organism to fuse scattered impressions, to revive and transform forgotten images, to invent, as in dreams, scenes that justify ripening emotions, and to feel affinities or equivalence in apparently disparate things. In a word, inspiration remakes the image of the world, or unmakes it, according to the mood of the soul. If the psyche is diseased, inspiration becomes madness; if the psyche is healthy and irrepressible, it becomes genius.

Moreover, in type and in its reaction to the facts, inspiration is far more primitive and pervasive than we commonly suppose. It runs down into the very rudiments of mind: it marks the birth of spirit. What could be more original than the sensation of sound, or the sensation of light? The psyche breeds these sensations at certain crises in animal life, when some external event or external object threatens or allures us. The sight or the sound therefore is born loaded for the spirit with anxiety or lust: because before creating these recognisable images inspiration has already filled the spirit with mute passion, with intense and abject concern for what is happening or about to happen. Therefore the most absorbing prospect opened up in animal life reveals a moving scene and an oncoming event. Inspiration is pictorial and prophetic. We find it at its height in the Hebrew prophets and in the Gospels.

The most sceptical philosopher when dreaming believes in his dream. Its transformations do not surprise him and its contradictions seem to him each a new revelation of the truth. He can begin to doubt only when some firm system of old inspirations crops up under his feet, and he feels the ground on which he is standing while his head is in the clouds. Such a system must first be built into the structure of language and buttressed by applications in the useful arts. Then in contrast to these conventions by which mankind manages to live, new and bolder inspirations may seem disruptive and fantastic. There ensues a battle of inspirations, the new against the old, the native against the foreign, the more speculative against the more practical. But in themselves all inspirations are speculative: that which is practical and useful can be only the action that may accompany them.

According to all this, when inspiration is considered psychologically, it appears to be something primitive and pervasive in the realm of mind; and the more miraculous its deliverance may seem, the more deeply human that deliverance will be. For inspiration represents the original contribution of the soul to experience, contrasted with the contribution made by dumb and accidental contact with material things.

This inner source of inspiration does not prejudice the ulterior question whether inspiration in any particular case is true or false. It may be either or neither. It is neither true nor false when no affirmation or action is involved in it, as for instance in inspired music: and even when inspiration moves powerfully to action or affirmation (as it does in the Gospels) the question of its truth or falseness cannot be decided offhand or by a single experiment. For the form in which the facts appear is itself a mental figment; and there might be diversity in two symbols, supplied by two different organs of sense or two different grammars of thought, without either of the two being, in its own mode, a false symbol for that reality. Common sense therefore can neither prove nor disprove the truth of an inspiration at first sight. The question, if

soluble at all, must be solved by a circumspect consideration of all the factors concerned.

It may seem to follow from this view that no inspiration can be *literally* true, since all are figments of the psyche and at best reveal external facts only symbolically. Yet, even on this hypothesis, literal truth might be revealed to one mind regarding the play of symbols in another: which is the reason why sceptical people find it easier to be humanists than to pin their faith on any philosophy or religion, or even on natural science. They feel on surer ground in conversation than in argument and can taste the savour of truth in a novel better than in a history. Religion and morals, at another level, profit by the same kinship of the object with the mind that considers it. We can recognise our own hopes in the assurances of a prophet, and be confirmed in them, as if they had proved true; and we can express our moral judgments with more confidence if the conscience of mankind, or of an impressive sage, can be quoted as an authority for them. In this case we may even feel the absurdity of claiming that our moral judgments should be true in any other sense than in being sincere and widespread: for they have no direct object other than the sentiment they express.

In religion, however, it is possible to entertain faith in the literal truth of certain inspirations, not by denying their psychological status and origin, but by positing a miraculous pre-established harmony between the inspired utterance and the absolute truth. A novelist, working up his own impressions and fancies, might *by miracle* write a story that had been actually enacted without his knowledge, by persons exactly like the characters in his book, and in places bearing the names of the places mentioned there, which he thought fictitious. Now, in a religious revelation, this miracle would have a *raison d'être* and a plausible explanation. God might bring it about that certain prophets should divine the exact truth in some respects: he might, for instance, have brought it about that our four Evangelists should have come, in casual ways, upon different

portions of the life and teaching of Christ, in its absolute reality. This is what many a wise and learned man believed until yesterday. There is nothing logically impossible about it. All that is requisite to make it credible is a belief in miracles, such as the Evangelists themselves possessed in happy abundance.

My personal sentiments on this point do not form part of my subject here. I have no wish to disguise them, and they will no doubt transpire without my leave, yet my object is not to pass judgment on the validity of Gospel truth, either historical or metaphysical. I wish only to analyse and detach, as far as possible, one original element in the inspiration of the Gospels, namely the dramatic presentation of the person of Christ. The habit of assuming that inspiration in the Scriptures was miraculous has led critics not to credit the Evangelists with any merit in this regard. Christ had been like that, he had spoken those very words; probably he had spoken others that it was a pity not to have recorded also. It was Christ himself, not anyone's idea of Christ, that the reader, and even the critic, felt he had before him; and the various Evangelists, with their limitations, were rather to be blamed for their little inconsistencies and misleading omissions than praised for the extraordinary impression which their picture of Jesus left upon the mind. Certainly, if the Holy Ghost was the direct and only responsible author of the Gospels and of all the Scriptures, we have nobody else to thank for them, and merely to regret the corruptions and disorder in which these oracles have been transmitted to us. The Holy Spirit dwelt in the eternal. He had stood beside the Creator at the foundations of the world, and himself had inspired all the prophets, and all the good actions and words of the saints. It had not been human art, but simple graciousness on God's part, to let us peep here and there into the life of Christ, and overhear some of his sayings. I should be sorry to disturb anyone who can accept this view, or who himself has received special revelations from on high. I speak of prophecy, without being myself a prophet, and address only those who find themselves in the same case.

In the everyday light of profane history and literary criticism it appears that the life and the human person of Christ, far from being a present reality of which the Evangelists, notebook in hand, have set down a few particulars, were little known or dwelt upon by the first generation of Christians. Saint Paul, the earliest of Christian writers, had seen Christ only in a vision; he had not read the Gospels for they were not yet written; and it is not Christ's life or precepts that interest this Apostle, but the evidence that Christ had appeared to others also, and above all, that he dwelt in the heart and spoke through the mouth of those who believed in him. His reported precepts and miracles were not at all what had converted Saint Paul. So long as these only were in question, he had zealously persecuted the new sect. What suddenly converted him was an apparition. A light from heaven had dazzled him, and when he had fallen to the earth he had heard a voice saying, *I am Jesus, whom thou persecutest*. Paul thus had visionary evidence that Jesus had risen from the dead and was truly the Messiah. This, and this alone, was the foundation of his faith.

But Paul had a most intense and fertile theological mind, and when that unexpected fact was once accepted, he was vehemently inspired with a theological system to explain and develop it. Jesus had been crucified, a fact that might seem to prove that he was not the Christ. But this objection came from sheer blindness to the secret meaning of Scripture, especially of Isaiah and the 22nd Psalm. Here the sorrows of Jesus and even his crucifixion were plainly foretold, although the unenlightened hearer and perhaps even the unwitting speaker might have supposed that nothing was signified except their own trials. But the Christ had to suffer and be sacrificed before he could triumph, as he presently would, when he came down again in the clouds of heaven, amid the trumpeting angels. And the reason for these necessary sufferings of the just man was the need of propitiation for the sins of the world. Christ, by dying crucified, had paid the price for us all, if only we believed in him. The law, which nobody could fulfill perfectly, convicted us all of sin and condemned us to damnation:

but Christ had made such as believed in him free, and had established a regimen of grace, by which the elect were sanctified and baptised in his blood, with no merits of their own. All therefore could now be saved immediately and gratis: and this was the glad tidings to be carried, in haste and in charity, to the ends of the earth.

This system was known to the Evangelists and appears by implication in some passages: but their inspiration was more like that of the Old Testament; and instead of developing a sentiment into a theory they tended to illustrate it in a story. Every text of Scripture recognised to apply prophetically to Christ became a guide in recounting his words and actions: for had these not occurred expressly in order that the Scriptures might be fulfilled? And every precept inspired by the conviction that the Kingdom of Heaven was at hand suggested a fable or parable to illustrate it. The cures and other miracles that the disciples for one or two generations had been performing in the name of Christ could be retold, with perfect logical propriety, as performed by Jesus himself: for was it not Christ, dwelling in the person of his disciples, that had worked the wonder? Thus the traditions handed down about him could be insensibly remodelled in being repeated and made harmonious with the office and the intention that Christ was now known to have had.

Another important source of inspiration, especially in the fourth Gospel, also has its counterpart in the theology of Saint Paul. When Christ was known only through visions or theories, it was easy to conceive him as an influence or a spirit working within oneself. A devout mystical life, in which the idea of Christ was the model and guide, then began to accompany the Christian in his apostolic labours, or even to seem more important and fruitful than any missionary work. What would all the miraculous gifts of the spirit be worth, if you had not charity? And what consolation could you find for the cruel perversity of the world, save the sacred union of your heart with Christ and with God? Would not

this consecration of yourself, though hidden, be really more efficacious than preaching in converting mankind? The image of Christ thus would become the inner monitor, the audible voice of your conscience, always present within you; a human image, yet the image of God. In loving Christ you would love all men, because he loved them; and in worshipping Christ you would be worshipping God, because he that hath seen the Son hath seen the Father who sent him.

Not all converts, however, could draw from their own well, like Saint Paul, a sufficient volume of conviction to slake their spiritual thirst, or could hear the recognisable voice of Christ speaking clearly within them. They required a more graphic, articulate, and external image of their Saviour, whose words and example might control and stimulate their languid apprehension. Miraculous episodes, and pregnant words uttered in recounting them, satisfied this need. So did the parables and precepts current in the legend of Jesus, and above all the drama of his Passion and Resurrection. Yet inspiration was always at work: and even when in modern times the printed text of the Bible was accepted as alone sufficient and inspired, the fountain of natural originality was by no means dried up in the souls of believing readers. Each treasured and endlessly repeated the special texts that seemed to him all-revealing; each formed his own image of the person of Christ and his own selection and arrangement of Christian precepts. Nor is inspiration less confident to-day in every truly religious preacher. He transports himself into the scene he is to describe; he rekindles in himself the thought to be communicated or the passion to be aroused: he embroiders upon his theme, expands it dramatically, and sees, as in a vision, what more *must* have been thought and done by all the persons concerned. He understands for the moment the secret designs of Providence. And if he can penetrate to the mind and purposes of God, how should he not know those of men and of angels? His faith makes his Gospel whole.

The Evangelists are preachers of this inspired kind. Even in the

fourth Gospel, where a dominant conception of Christ's nature and mission appears, there is much else of a traditional or legendary type, and nowhere do we find a coherent or comprehensive vision, either of doctrine or history, such as might be conceived to have come down from heaven complete. This was an ideal towards which the first Christians were struggling out of their originally confused and dispersed persuasions. Each had heard something, or seen something that had converted him; each had had his own copious inspirations in consequence; and it was the task of the Church to harmonise these oracles of private faith, and in particular to form a definite idea of Christ, as he was in heaven and as he had appeared on earth. The Gospels that we possess were steps in that direction. They were composed in the Church, by the Church, and for the Church. Although the inspiration for each particular must have come originally to some individual, it was the sense of the assembly as a body, and the wisdom of its leaders, that determined which revelations should be approved, adopted, propagated, and perhaps incorporated into the ritual of their local churches; and it was the sense of the Church universal, issuing from much rivalry and many a dispute, that finally selected and sanctioned such revelations as seemed to fortify and clarify the common faith. It was the Church that gave authority to the Gospels, not the Gospels that determined the faith of the Church.

Once written down and approved, however, the Gospels and the other parts of the New Testament became a common standard of reference in controversy and a common source of doctrine and sacred history for the clergy, as the Old Testament also remained. The Gospels, with their mixture of precept, legend, and theology, were an invaluable store of texts for sermons and of moving scenes to rekindle religious devotion and to guide the lives of the faithful. Yet the Gospels needed completion and interpretation in many directions, and it was the duty of the later Fathers and Councils to carry on the same inspired labours. On the graphic side, the

miracles and the Passion of Christ had been vividly narrated; there was little or nothing to ask for there; but on the other hand his relation to the Father and to the soul of the believer remained intellectually obscure. Christology and the nature of salvation and grace therefore formed the first questions on which the Church had to seek for more light. More light could legitimately be hoped for, not from new sources, but by meditation on the essence and implications of the traditional faith. The Gospels, and in particular the idea of Christ, could thus be kept living and self-renewing by the very inspiration that had originally composed them. Here faith was justified inwardly on the exact principle that the philosopher Bradley recommended in the nineteenth century to English metaphysicians: If a thing *must* be, and if that thing *may* be, then that thing *is*.

There is a curious legend of an early date concerning the circumstances in which Saint John came to compose his Gospel. No doubt the anecdote is apochryphal, but it shows what, at the end of the second century, was deemed the proper and edifying way of approaching such a task. "At the entreaty of his disciples, and of his bishop, John the Apostle said: 'Fast ye now with me for three days, and whatsoever shall have been revealed to each, let us report to one another.' That same night it was revealed to Andrew the Apostle that, with the corroboration of all, John should write the whole in his own name." Anyone, then, proposing to write a Gospel was not expected to consult witnesses or to cross-question his own memories or presumptions, but rather to gather together a knot of pious souls, all fasting, and to collect their sundry inspirations; or else, in the case of a great apostle like John, to withdraw into solitude and with earnest prayers and meditations to await revelations from the spirit. At the same time, inspiration was not suffered to run wild. The general sentiment of the Church both prompted the Evangelist in his undertaking and reserved the right to reject or to censor the result. Yet the eye of the Church, no less than that of the prophet, was fixed

the created soul is rather life than wisdom, rather the Psyche than the Logos: but something of the Logos may descend too, and we find in *John* a number of other terms, the Light, the Way, the Truth, that fall in well with the mediating office of Christ, as teacher and redeemer. Yet there are still other terms, Life and Love, that seem to fit better the intimate essence of his person, as if he were the Spirit incarnate, rather than the Word. And the constant use of these abstract terms in *John* chills a little the underlying warmth and tragic inspiration of the narrative. They also destroy the lifelikeness of the speeches put into Christ's mouth; the human foreground is lost, and the rhetorical distances become cold and empty.

Even in the narrative and dialogue, admirable as they are in themselves, the mystical signification sometimes intervenes prematurely. Episodes are introduced and left half-told for the sake of pointing a moral, or explaining their symbolic and sacramental value. The image of Christ in these parts becomes correspondingly pale and impersonal. He seems to be addressing all mankind, or only an abstracted part of the soul, rather than his living hearers; or else to be preoccupied with his own metaphysical dignity. Protestations and formulas are repeated liturgically, without gaining in clearness. The writer no doubt is labouring under the difficulty of having things to say for which there is no traditional language. He cannot wait for a fit language to be developed, nor can he enter into a logical definition of terms: he is reduced to loading the few terms he has at hand with all the force of his insight, and leaving it for time and spiritual experience to reveal his meaning.

On the whole, however, these beginnings of theology in *John* are far from destroying the graphic and topographically distinct impression produced, or the evangelical character of this Gospel. Essentially the book remains a prophecy, an announcement, and a challenge. We are summoned to believe, if we hope to be saved. There is the same sense as in the other Gospels of the precarious and unbearable state of the world, of the imminent catastrophe and the awful issue.

tions are self-inspired, if our very senses are dependent on our organs, are they not rather fountains of illusion than revelation of the truth? This, however, is a decadent complication in thought; it puzzles those who are reasoning in words, and incapable of recognising the vital and animal nature of belief. Sight, thought, language, and inspiration generally are true enough when they serve as symbols, or as a system of symbols, for the real conditions of life and for the potentialities of that life. To ask for more, is to quarrel with one's tools.

The Evangelists were neither decadent nor speculative, and for them the truth of inspiration was a matter of course. If facts seemed to contradict it, that was a momentary matter: presently those facts would disappear, and the truth of inspiration would flash and thunder from one end of the sky to the other. Nor is there any logical impossibility in such a view. *By miracle*, let me repeat, the psyche might have anticipated precisely what was about to happen. *By miracle* the powerful conclusions of Thomas Aquinas or the fasting visions of John the Evangelist might be true materially as well as poetically. Our ancestors found it possible to live quite roughly and heartily in this world, while swearing by the exact geography of heaven and hell. And who knows what myths our descendants may not believe, and think themselves vastly enlightened?

Meantime, all that I aspire to evoke, in so far as sympathetic study may avail, is the idea of Christ presupposed in the Gospels and present, before and after the Gospels were written, to the Christian mind. This image is highly complex. It had been formed simultaneously in many minds having different habits and tendencies, as appears in the Gospels themselves. Moreover this image essentially represents a mystery, the mystery of God-in-man; so that it possesses a double interest for the philosopher: first, as an important figure in the history of religion and art, and then as a symbol for the high moral and ontological mysteries which it personifies.

The text of the Gospels supplies materials for forming the idea of Christ rather than a distinct definition of it; yet the words and actions of Jesus recorded there, and especially his Passion, Resurrection, and mystical presence in the Eucharist and in the hearts of the faithful, had a magnifying and cumulative force, and imposed a more and more definite idea of Christ on the devout believer. Through a thousand reiterations in sermons, prayers, ritual observances, and works of painting and sculpture, this idea became a dominating feature in the life of Christendom. For some it still remains the living centre of all religion. Newman, for instance, tells us that "it was the thought of Christ which gave a life to the promise of that eternity which without Him would be, in any soul, nothing short of an intolerable burden."¹ This may seem an exaggerated pessimism to lovers of natural life, who desire immortality simply because annihilation seems to them horrible: but there is a type of transcendental reflection (which I will revert to in the end) that can identify the idea of God in man with that of spirit incarnate anywhere: and that indeed is all that "any soul" can reasonably care about.

Newman writes also, just before the words quoted, that as "a temporal sovereign makes himself felt by means of his subordinates, who bring his power and will to bear upon every individual of his subjects who personally know him not," so "the universal Deliverer . . . is found to have imprinted the Image or idea of Himself, who fulfills the one great need of human nature, the Healer of its wounds, the Physician of the soul; this Image it is that both creates faith and then rewards it."

So speaks a refined spirit, who, in circumstances very different from those of the Evangelists, does not hesitate to join them in hypostatising the idea of Christ into a divine power at work in the hearts of men, and creating there the only true religion and the only pure morality. We need not follow them in so impetuous an assumption; yet we may admit that an image or idea that can

¹ J. H. Card. Newman, *A Grammar of Assent*, p. 465.

be so idolised by sensitive and noble minds deserves to be studied and to be clarified. Some inborn predicament of the spirit must be expressed in such an inspiration. What exactly is this inspiration as enshrined in the Gospels? And what, in fact, is the predicament that it expresses? Such are the questions that I endeavour to answer in the following pages.



CHARACTER OF THE SEVERAL GOSPELS

Does the order in which the Gospels are traditionally put before us correspond to an essential development in them of the idea of Christ? Not entirely. It is clear that the fourth Gospel is much the most speculative. The image of Christ there remains complex, but is perfectly unified; whereas in the other Gospels sundry independent reports, presumptions, and theories are juxtaposed in good faith, without any attempt to interpret them in the light of one commanding intuition. Even in the third Gospel, where the Evangelist tells us that he had many predecessors, and that it had seemed good to him also to set down *in order those things which are most surely believed among us*, a great part of the anecdotes and precepts that follow form a mere anthology, as in *Matthew* and *Mark*. Yet here the original compiler, doubtless Saint Luke himself, is a deliberate literary writer, with a marked personal character and tradition, intensely Jewish in spirit and in liturgical habits, desirous also of conciliating the pagan official world, of sweetening the Gospel and of harmonising its message not only with Hebrew prophecy but also with humanistic sentiment. His piety and eloquence are already ecclesiastical. He composes or introduces beautiful psalms and surrounds the public life of Jesus with a celestial and idyllic *Vorgeschichte*.

I am not sure that this need be an earlier development of the idea of Christ than the one found in the fourth Gospel: it is more devout, more feminine, and might well follow upon speculative

flights among the bolder converts. Saint Luke, who was Saint Paul's disciple and the original author of the *Acts of the Apostles*, must have been thoroughly familiar with the notion of Christ as the source of an inner influence and saving grace. Yet it is only in *John* that this mystic union with Christ appears in the Gospels, whilst in *Luke* it is rather the legend of his early life that is developed: which may have been done in defence against Gnostic heresies, in which the link with Hebrew Scriptures was broken and the humanity of Christ denied.

In all the Gospels the admirable quality of the scenes and the sayings is due less to the several Evangelists than to the traditions of Hebrew and of all oriental eloquence; and also perhaps to the fact that all these parables, maxims and episodes had been recounted orally numberless times before, here and there, they were set down on paper. If sometimes, in this process, their original inspiration and terseness may have been lost, at any rate what subsisted would possess the detachable and applicable quality of proverbs. Preachers, prophets and evangelists would conspire to put into the mouth of Christ whatever words their inspiration thought to be worthy of him: the more memorable and impressive of these words would be retained and repeated; and the idea of Christ would grow and solidify in the minds of the faithful under the control of the very faith that evoked it.

In *Mark* the image of Christ, his spontaneous mind, his action, his mysterious ascendancy dominate the scene with greater lifelikeness and force than in other synoptic Gospels. The narrative is condensed, fragmentary and dramatic. There are perceptible threads or *motifs* running through it, and giving it a moral unity. One is the motive of secrecy, gradual self-revelation, final public assertion on the part of Jesus of his Messiahship and divinity. Yet his super-human status and powers break through from the beginning of his public life, causing surprise and wonder, and leaving his nature veiled and the idea of him, in his disciples' minds, puzzling and obscure. Only at rare moments do the clouds break, heaven opens,

and a voice from above proclaims, "This is my beloved Son"; or Jesus expressly leads his favourite disciples to the summit of Thabor, and is there transfigured before their eyes, and seen conversing with Moses and Elijah. He is always secretly, he has been from all eternity, a denizen of heaven: he may truly say: "Before Abraham was, I am"; yet he continues to enjoin silence on his immediate followers, until his time shall come.

This mystery, as touched upon in *Mark*, seems truer to life and deeper than if it were prudently guarded by Jesus as a matter of policy, lest there should be a premature insurrection of the people or a misunderstanding of his mission. In *Mark* Jesus never becomes, as he tends to become in *John*, a visiting God speaking through a glazed mask of humanity. He remains an impetuous, virile, commanding human being, yielding to circumstances and himself living dramatically. Omniscience and omnipotence are not always at his command; he has a human memory and foresight, and human moods; yet he knows, as if by faith, that he is more than human, that omniscience and omnipotence are latent within him, though his access to them is not always immediate. There are only moments, in action or in prayer, when the transition to the deeper truth can be made and the human will and imagination can melt and disappear in the divine vision. The modesty in concealing divinity is therefore not feigned; there is a genuine confession of humanity in it which, however, does not exclude, on occasion, a bold and overpowering assertion of divinity.

In this respect the image of Christ in *Mark* seems to me the most perfect to be found in the Gospels. It has dramatic truth: for such would certainly be the experience of a spirit fed by two natures, able to make them alternate centres for its intellectual survey and its moral sentiment. A man leading a double life, belonging to two nations or to two families, does not altogether lose his sense of the one which, at the moment, may be in abeyance. He remains the same person throughout; yet the portion of his life that is not being enacted becomes shadowy and at moments almost incredible to

him, as if he had lived it only in a dream; and he will deprecate the intrusion into either scene of the language and the presuppositions belonging to the other. The idea of Christ is the idea of God made man: an extreme ideal instance of such psychological doubleness. It cannot be justly conceived without allowing alternation and interplay between the two themes, keeping each true to itself, yet weaving them together doubly: for in the divine vision the human life must always lie open to complete inspection and be perpetually present in all its parts; while in the human experience events and thoughts can come only successively, and illuminated at each moment by an intelligence of varying scope. In the divine vision every human life will always be pictured but never experienced; in a human experience the divine truth will never be experienced or exhausted, but will always be felt to overarch and sustain the flight of time.

Another *motif* conspicuous in the early chapters of *Mark* is the relation, almost the familiarity, of Christ with the devils. They recognise him at once, in spite of his human guise; they feel his presence and power, as it were, electrically: he exercises this power over them out of pity for their human victims, but exercises it under certain conditions or laws established in the spirit-world. He asks them their names; and once he grants their request, if they must be cast out of the man they are possessed of, that they may enter into the bodies of the swine feeding on the hillside. Strange, to our modern sense, that Christ should listen to the cruel devils rather than consider the helpless swine and their helpless owners: but there would seem to be a higher fraternity in the spirit-world, even between the holy and the fallen spirits, that may take precedence, like a family bond, over the private promptings of the heart.

This dutifulness of Christ, in spite of his divine insight and impartiality, appears elsewhere in regard to the Jews and the Law. Christ has come, in one sense, to supersede them; yet as a man he is himself a Jew and subject to the Law. He therefore gives

them their legal due, as against the heathen; yet with an overwhelming sympathy with the innocent outsiders, and even with those, like the tax-gatherers and harlots, who are not innocent. How far this sympathy, at once divine and naturalistic, may override, not only particular legal prescriptions, but moral pride altogether, is a delicate question to which I shall revert later. Here, we are concerned only to mark the conjunction, in the idea of Christ, of the native of earth and the native of heaven, equally at home in the ways of both, and superior to both as a pure spirit. This kind of devils, he explains to his disciples, can be driven out only by prayer and fasting. There is method in magic, and a nature in the supernatural. We must put up with an inexorable order in the other world, as in this, yet we are allowed to feel the impatience of a free mind that, in bowing to both, transcends both in its clear insight and clear affections.

It is noticeable in *Mark* that at those moments of high tension when the divine nature in Christ breaks through, as before his judges or during his Passion, the human nature is not superseded, as sometimes in *John*, but on the contrary remains spontaneous, manly and young. Jesus here is the brave martyr, maintaining his invisible bonds with the invisible not in long discourses, but in sudden challenges under provocation, in brief transfigurations, until, crying out with a loud voice, he gives up the ghost. His humanity had been obsessed, strained, at once inspired and arrested, by his divinity; he had carried that sacred but almost intolerable burden all his life, locked secretly in his heart; and now the spirit may burst forth from its prison, free at last from all limitations and partialities.

Yet that brave body, so sanctified and so tried, could not be abandoned to perish in dishonour. It would be revived presently: the spirit would return to it, not now to lay any further burdens upon it, but to transmute it into an incorruptible body, a pure lamp for the light, a perfect instrument for the word, a wise heart, loving all things justly. The union between God and man in Christ

was something too precious to be transitory. It should be raised from an incident in the economy of redemption to the very essence and realisation of salvation itself. But this is an ulterior mystery that must not distract us here from the task of simple inspection.

We find, then, in *Mark* a gradual revelation of the nature of Christ, its gradual discovery by his disciples, even a gradual overcoming of diffidence on his own part in avowing it. It was a secret too deeply hidden in his heart to be uttered in that blind world. The *disciplina arcani* is no mere ruse; it is a reserve imposed by humility and charity on one who, if he is the Son of God, is also the son of man. The glimpses we catch of this progressive revelation are fragmentary but vivid. An eye-witness seems to be recalling them; and we seem to assist in the birth of Christian faith in the minds of the Apostles.

The Gospel of *Matthew*, though it is placed first in our canon, and begins with a genealogy of Jesus (or rather Joseph, his legal father) is written from the point of view of a Church already established. It offers not the recollections of a disciple, but a defence of his belief. Jesus, it argues, could be the Messiah, in spite of his momentary failure to fulfil the requirements of that office, since the very prophets that raised those expectations predicted that the Messiah should first suffer and be rejected. Jesus himself, after his Resurrection, had appeared in the guise of a stranger to two of his disciples on the way to Emmaus, and had expounded the prophecies to them in this sense. *Matthew* repeats those interpretations, and at every turn stops to observe that such an event had happened or such a thing had been said, "that it might be fulfilled which was spoken of the Lord by the prophet." Christ's death, moreover, did not annul the glorious promises of his advent; for he was coming again presently in the clouds of heaven, to found his everlasting kingdom.

Such is the guiding thread in the first Gospel considered as a composition having a single author; but while all the Gospels are evidently collections of traditional themes, and fragmentary,

Matthew seems more distinctly than the others to represent the general *catechesis* current in the early Church. It combines matter of different kinds, drawn probably from different sources. Besides the story of Christ's preaching and Passion, which is like that in *Mark* expanded, it contains a rich collection of precepts, many of them gathered together in the Sermon on the Mount, in express contrast to the laws of Moses; and it contains also a rich collection of parables. Both these elements are of the highest importance in defining the idea of Christ, since the precepts show us in what estimation he held human hopes and ambitions while the parables paint the world of nature as he saw it, and also the economy of grace. Some parables teach worldly wisdom, and others propose spiritual standards: we have in them the two sides or the two strata of Christian morals. Nevertheless the person of Christ seems to recede a little here behind the apologues and the maxims put in his mouth; and it is rather in the miracles, with the words that accompany them, that the living mystery of his being confronts us again, so that familiarity with it may gradually dispel its strangeness.

Apart from these important things that he recounts from memory or hearsay or perhaps from earlier records not in the Greek language, the compiler in *Matthew* does not seem to have much personal inspiration. The genealogy at the beginning, the preoccupation with finding prophetic texts fulfilled paradoxically in casual events, and the monotonous appeal to dreams and angelic visitations to guide the action, all smack of a secondary composition. Such might well have been the ideas uppermost in this or that group of early Christians, arguing with the Jews or struggling in themselves with their Hebraic preconceptions; but we are not helped to conceive more clearly that idea of Christ which is to inspire the Church and to be the model for all the saints.

In the third Gospel the idea of Christ is doubly developed, biographically and liturgically. The writer, though attached to Jewish traditions, is comparatively a man of the world, and at a

considerable intellectual remove from the primitive disciples. Nor does he see Christ directly in the mystical sphere, after the manner of his master, Saint Paul, who had seen Christ distinctly as the Christ, never as the human Jesus. In *Luke* Christ is again conceived graphically, picturesquely, not with the spasmodic force of specific glimpses, but with the diffused luminosity of a conventional work of art. All is tender and edifying, for Saint Luke is a pious artist. The Parable of the Prodigal Son, for instance, is a little masterpiece, as noble and affecting as the best episodes in the Old Testament. For with all his softness and measure Saint Luke can retain the sublimity of the Hebrew faith and can worthily continue its liturgical traditions in the psalms that he puts into the mouth of the Virgin Mary, Zacharias and Simeon. The mystery of Christ has begun to fructify in the Christian mind; interest and imagination have turned to the implications of being the Son of God, armed with divine power and omniscience, yet a man, offering himself as a model and a victim for love of his fellow men. Still it is piety rather than speculation that inspires Saint Luke. The links with the Jewish past are preserved with tenderness and affection. There is continuity in his two revelations, a love of seemliness and ceremony, a moderate tone towards the world and a tendency to conciliate enemies and diffuse an atmosphere of prosperity and peace.

Most significant, when we consider the future development of Christian devotion, is the appearance of the Virgin Mary as a leading and even a speaking character. In *Mark* no backward look had been cast towards the ancestry, birth, or childhood of Jesus; he had been presented as he appeared to his disciples at the beginning of his mission, commanding, imposing, irresistible: in himself the warrant and evidence of his authority. In *Matthew*, a first retrospective implication of his being the Son of God is advanced: he was born of a virgin, and had no earthly father. Nevertheless, the angels that announce this mystery announce it to Joseph, and it is Joseph's genealogy that is recited as being that which rendered

Jesus a son of David. We are in the region of Jewish legality and prophecy, not in that of Christian intuition. But in *Luke* the angel—and no vague voice or presence in a dream but a courtly celestial ambassador, the archangel Gabriel—appears to Mary herself; she demurs, having made a vow of virginity:¹ a remarkably non-Jewish impulse although symbolically proper when we consider the spiritual revolution, the entirely new religion, that was to spring from her womb. Gabriel explains how this vow will be entirely respected in her motherhood: and she gives her formal consent: "Behold the handmaid of the Lord; be it unto me according to thy word": a consent that raises the Virgin Mary into an initial collaborator in the whole economy of redemption. Here we have the mustard-seed that was to grow into the flourishing tree of devotion to the Theotokos and the Madonna.

In spite of such prophetic glances and of the avowed intention to be synthetic and to sum up everything in order, there are evidences that the text of *Luke* had never been thoroughly digested, or else had undergone interpolations without regard to its intended unity. Maxims and episodes found in *Mark* or in *Matthew* are often reproduced as if hurriedly, in imperfect and inferior form; or several of them successively, as in a mere inventory of notes. The very scruple of the Virgin Mary just referred to seems to some critics to be an interpolation in an original text that kept within the Jewish convention. And a greater anomaly, in so demure a writer, is the parable of the unjust steward, whom his lord commended, because he had done wisely: an admirable satirical fable to show that the children of this world are wiser in their generation than the children of light, but not leading intelligibly to either of the two morals that are appended to it, the first ambiguous in itself and the second belonging apparently to the parable of the talents. Disconcerting also is the rabbinical argument for the resur-

¹ The English text reads: "How shall this be, seeing that I know not a man?" But all women have been virgins once; so that this answer would be silly, not to say provocative, unless it meant that, although married or betrothed, she was *pledged* to preserve her virginity.

rection drawn from the fact that Moses called God the God of Abraham after Abraham was dead. Perhaps this is only an *argumentum ad hominem* and meant to entangle the Scribes in their own net; but the Evangelist does not seem to see it in that light. And more of the same kind follows. The Messiah could not be the son of David because David in the Psalms calls him his Lord. Is then Christ rejecting the suggestion that he himself is a son of David? Or, although he knows that he is a son of David, does he merely dismiss that fact as unimportant, seeing he is also the son of God, and therefore very much the Lord of David? Yet if Saint Luke, or the reviser or editor of his Gospel, had felt this, why should he have taken the trouble to draw up a mythical genealogy for Jesus, descending from Adam, through David, to Joseph, who was not really his father? In fine, the composition of *Luke* is unequal, and the beauty of many parts is marred by the incongruity of the other parts, and by a certain lack of speculative clearness. The idea of Christ is less firmly composed here than in the other Gospels, as if it had been drawn from secondary sources and not vitalised by a strong personal inspiration or enthusiasm.

The first words of the fourth Gospel are the same as the first words of Genesis: *In the beginning*. Had the New Testament been a continuation of the Old, adding more historical or prophetic matter, and further precepts that merely revised and rationalised the Law of Moses, such an opening would not have been suitable: but the rest of the first verse of *John* suffices to undeceive us. For Genesis says: *In the beginning God created the heaven and the earth*; whereas *John* says: *In the beginning was the Word*. We are really at the beginning of something entirely different, and the word "beginning" has a different sense. In Genesis we were carried back in imagination to the birth of the world, to the first event in earthly history; but in *John* we are carried back to the Creator that Genesis mentioned continually but never considered except as the power manifested at each moment in whatsoever arose or happened. The impersonation of this power was vivid; we saw an

impetuous monarch planning and commanding; but the interest lay entirely in the work and in its spontaneous developments, because once created it had a will and a way of its own. Indeed, if we analysed the notion of creation, as it was not meant to be analysed, we might find it to be quite secondary and incapable of denoting the beginning of the world. For this presupposes two things already existing; one a creator or artisan, and the other a material with definite possibilities and resistances to be turned into a new shape. This material and that artisan, with the possible interplay between them, would compose a world existing before the creation. So we find it pictured in *Genesis* itself, when the *Spirit of God*—a strong wind—*moved upon the face of the waters*. There is therefore no attempt to reach a beginning, but only a lively imagination picturing the stages through which the human world may have passed, or may be destined to pass, within the range of our vital interests.

When we come to *John*, reflection has been turned upon the meaning of the current terms, and the phrase *In the beginning* has lost its temporal reference and signifies *in principle*, or at the logical roots of being. The term God is retained, with all its traditional unction, for it is still a Jew that writes, although he has passed through a Platonising school of dialectic. At the beginning, he tells us, was the Word, the Logos. What does this mean? The immediate source of the notion is Philo Judaeus and the Alexandrian Jewish school of Wisdom. Sophia and Logos had become, in this school, aspects or emanations of the Deity. God was no longer merely a power, a whirlwind or a demiurgos. He was a supreme focus of life, the ultimate intensity and perfection of being, towards which all things aspired in so far as they had life and happiness. And the word Logos in particular signified order or reason; so that we may begin to understand the sense of saying, as the text of *John* proceeds to do, that the Logos was with God, and that without the Logos was not anything made that was made. For definite things arise by assuming a specific form or essence, by

beginning to exemplify some distinct character: and the field of these characters, with their essential relations, is the eternal Logos.

The Nicene creed expresses this idea by saying that "by him," that is by Christ identified with the Logos, "all things were made"; a misleading phrase unless we perceive that "by" means "through" or "in terms of"; for the Logos was not a second power, added to God and the Father, but a condition without which the creation could have had no consistence or character. *By identifying Christ with the Logos, the Evangelist has avoided the semblance of reduplicating the Godhead.* A word is not an existing substance or force, apart from the tongue and the mind that utter it: it is the form that the mind and the vocal organs must adopt if they are to utter anything in particular. Logos was therefore an appropriate term for the Platonists to adopt in describing the creation; for each idea or essence, by being embodied in matter, turned that parcel of matter into a distinct and recognisable thing.

Philo, being a Jew and contemporary with Jesus, had no occasion to identify this element of deity, God's wisdom, with any human being: and that in which his Logos became flesh was not a particular man, but the whole creation and the whole history of the world. I don't know in what circumstances this incarnation or phenomenalising of the Platonic ideas came to be assimilated to the son of God, become man. The fact that in Christ the power and the wisdom of God were manifested, established the analogy: but an anomaly seems to appear when we consider how remote from the Logos or the Nous was the inspiration of Christ. His mission was not to create but to redeem and to save; and his wisdom spoke in parables and precepts, not in grammatical or conceptual hierarchies of terms. He was a living person, not the morphology of the universe. I cannot help thinking that it was an unfortunate accident that the *Son* of God and the *wisdom* of God should have seemed to coincide, as being both immediately and inwardly generated within the divine life, and thought of as its second term. That divine element which seems to descend into

the created soul is rather life than wisdom, rather the Psyche than the Logos: but something of the Logos may descend too, and we find in *John* a number of other terms, the Light, the Way, the Truth, that fall in well with the mediating office of Christ, as teacher and redeemer. Yet there are still other terms, Life and Love, that seem to fit better the intimate essence of his person, as if he were the Spirit incarnate, rather than the Word. And the constant use of these abstract terms in *John* chills a little the underlying warmth and tragic inspiration of the narrative. They also destroy the lifelikeness of the speeches put into Christ's mouth; the human foreground is lost, and the rhetorical distances become cold and empty.

Even in the narrative and dialogue, admirable as they are in themselves, the mystical signification sometimes intervenes prematurely. Episodes are introduced and left half-told for the sake of pointing a moral, or explaining their symbolic and sacramental value. The image of Christ in these parts becomes correspondingly pale and impersonal. He seems to be addressing all mankind, or only an abstracted part of the soul, rather than his living hearers; or else to be preoccupied with his own metaphysical dignity. Protestations and formulas are repeated liturgically, without gaining in clearness. The writer no doubt is labouring under the difficulty of having things to say for which there is no traditional language. He cannot wait for a fit language to be developed, nor can he enter into a logical definition of terms: he is reduced to loading the few terms he has at hand with all the force of his insight, and leaving it for time and spiritual experience to reveal his meaning.

On the whole, however, these beginnings of theology in *John* are far from destroying the graphic and topographically distinct impression produced, or the evangelical character of this Gospel. Essentially the book remains a prophecy, an announcement, and a challenge. We are summoned to believe, if we hope to be saved. There is the same sense as in the other Gospels of the precarious and unbearable state of the world, of the imminent catastrophe and the awful issue.

At once in the first chapter, after the five mystic verses, we return to earth, to local traditions, and to the story of John the Baptist. Yet scarcely is the new theme broached than the writer falls back into his ontology, and stops to tell us the whatness and the non-whatness of the personage he is about to introduce. The alternation between two strands or two levels of reality characterises this whole Gospel: it resembles those pictures, like Raphael's *Transfiguration*, in which an agitated human scene fills the lower half of the canvas, and a celestial vision, almost disconnected with it, hovers unsuspected above. The light shines far beyond the darkness, and the darkness is not illuminated.

Where dawn breaks, where a dubious yet awakening light troubles the heart, is in the apparitions and the words of Christ to single persons. Mystical experiences are private: it is in incommunicably burdened dreams that enigmatic words acquire a positive magic, and seem to solve the riddle of suffering and doubt. When Christ speaks to Nicodemus, to the woman of Samaria, or to the man born blind, he employs enigmatic phrases, puzzles them by speaking of being born again, of living water which if we drink we shall never thirst, and of believing in the Son of God. Intellectually no explanation is given: but there is a spell in the way the words are spoken, there is a deeper knowledge of the soul addressed, more concern about it, than the poor soul itself ever thought of having; and by experience, by inner transformation, that soul begins to understand what it must mean to be born once more, and to drink living water, never to thirst again; and as to knowing who the Son of God may be, so as to believe in him, the soul is not surprised to hear: *Thou hast seen him, and it is he that talketh with thee*. Those enigmas, those gaunt abstractions have become human, they have become a presence. That miraculous power has revealed itself as solicitude, as a love capable of evoking in the soul something worth loving: and the soul says: *Lord, I believe*; and it worships him.

The existence of two natures or two worlds, one physical, the other spiritual, creates no difficulty in itself; but when conjoined

in a single person they become rivals, and the one momentarily less active suffers and becomes restive. There are various ways in which such tension might be dominated and reduced to a moral harmony. Humility, reserve, and secrecy on the human side may ward off any conflict, as when Christ refuses to work a miracle or to reveal himself, because his time is not yet come. But in *John* we see another phase of the same tension. Here it is the divine side that speaks; but being obliged to speak a human language to men who know no other, there is a tendency, almost a compulsion, to speak in riddles, giving a secret spiritual meaning to words that are understood by the hearers in a literal and material sense. The effect is a distressing misunderstanding, perplexity or revolt in the poor public, and a withdrawal, with anathemas, on the part of the prophet. The irony of this does not escape him. After curing a blind man and preaching fruitlessly to the Jews, he says bitterly that he came into this world for *judgment, that they who see not might see, and they who see might be made blind.*

Throughout this Gospel, that interest in ontology that dictated the opening verses appears also in the discourses of Jesus. He continually reverts to the authority and power that he derives from his union with the Father; this union is ineffable and has existed from all eternity. He has come to save the world, but faith in him is the condition of salvation. All power is in his hands, and if he endures persecution and moves towards his death, he does so voluntarily and with full foreknowledge, because such is the Father's will.

These theological and Christological discourses in *John* enlarge and etherialise the idea of Christ and carry it out of earthly time and space. If the representation here seems less true to life externally, I think internally, granting that Christ is the Son of God, it is more profoundly true and dramatic, because it represents, not what Christ would have been likely to say aloud on those various occasions, but what he would have been likely secretly to feel. They represent the upper cloud-layer, so to speak, of thoughts passing at that time over his mental sky. Take these speeches and

these claims not as protestations vainly made to uncomprehending audiences, but as contrasting nostalgic assurances arising within Christ himself in the midst of his disappointments, and you will cease to think them irrelevant or egotistical. Such assurances need not have been concealed from the disciples; they might have been expressed in a look or a sigh, or in comments made afterwards, if they were not supplied altogether by the inspiration of the Evangelist. He represents himself to be the beloved disciple, who would have been best able to overhear such mysterious words, to treasure them even if not understood, and to weave them later into his recollections. Great new lights, nothing less than the Paraclete and the whole theology of Saint Paul, had come to shed unexpected meanings both on events and on doctrine; the faith had been clarified and transfigured. This Evangelist in particular shows a pervasive sense for the duality and contrast between the exoteric and the esoteric life in Christ; but he was not a dramatic artist; he sometimes loses the thread and confuses the action; and the soliloquies on his stage are not separated from the dialogue.

It is perhaps in the sixth chapter of *John* that the play of double meanings and ironical metaphors appears at its height. After a familiar scene with the disciples and the fishing craft on the strand of the Lake of Galilee, and after a version of the miracle of the loaves and fishes, the mystical note is struck with the words: *Labour not for the meat which perisheth*. Christ resents that the people should follow him because he miraculously gives them food, not for himself and for spiritual guidance. This last was lost even on his nearest disciples: they were drawn to him by his person and by his miracles, and their faith was not in his teaching but in the greater miracles that he would one day work. When now he speaks of *that meat which endureth for everlasting life*, better than the manna from heaven that Moses gave them, they ask what they should do to procure that excellent meat. Christ replies: *Believe in me. I am that bread*. Here is another enigma, darker than the first; but it is useless to offer these people that truly

heavenly bread, because they do not believe. Whereupon a third mystery, the darkest of all, the mystery of predestination, at once confronts us: *This is the will of him that sent me, that everyone that seeth the son and believeth on him may have everlasting life: and I will raise him up at the last day.* That the Jews murmured can hardly surprise us. Freedom from hunger and thirst is offered them after they die, perhaps of thirst or of hunger. This was not what they asked for. They were not so superstitious as to fear to be hungry after they were dead.

But such unregenerate murmurs do not keep the Johannine Christ, though saddened, from continuing his sublime revelations. *The bread that I will give is my flesh, which I will give for the life of the world.* Thinking ourselves more discerning than those materialistic Jews, we may have assumed that this bread of life was of course the gospel, the message and purer morality proclaimed by Jesus: but now we find an unexpected complication. The bread is no doubt a spiritual grace; but this grace comes only to those predestined to receive it by virtue of their faith; and this life-giving faith in turn, we are now told, comes to us only because Christ gave his human flesh and blood as a sacrifice for our sins. Thus the mystery of predestination leads us to the mystery of the atonement.

The text at this point carries us no further: but the Church, and perhaps the Evangelist himself, after the manner of Saint Paul, could not think of this reversion from spiritual grace to a fleshly sacrifice, without thinking at once of the Eucharist also: so that the mystery of the bodily presence of Christ in the Sacrament, and of the efficacy of the Communion as a means of grace, add themselves inevitably to the argument. The metaphor about the bread that Christ should give us turns out to be less metaphorical than we had assumed in our pertness. As there is a genuine humanity in Christ, so there is a constantly material vehicle for spiritual graces, a circulation of healing and symbolic miracles by which heaven and earth are linked in a single economy.

This conjunction of flesh and spirit, with insistence on love, marks the Johannine tradition, and gives us such hints as we can hope for on the ultimate nature of the divine life. That life contains complementary aspects and movements, expressed in figures of speech which, if pressed and taken too literally, become confusing and contradictory. The Father is the source of everything: the Son, the Word, can utter nothing but that which the Father has enjoined; he is a messenger, sent on a sacrificial mission that he must fulfil obediently, before he can return to the Father, who is greater than he. At the same time, the Father has given all power to the Son, loves him and loves mankind only as they love the Son, and assimilate themselves to him. Then they also become the Father's children. For the Father and the Son are one; the Father lives in the Son and the Son in the Father; and by faith and the infusion of the Holy Spirit, the elect, whom the Father has given to the Son, will live in him and he in them.

Intellectually we are hardly more enlightened by all this than we were in *Mark* by the living presence and the power of God in the man Christ. That the Son is derived from the Father is implied by that title, and we begin by proclaiming the dependence of the Son on the Father that sent him. We proceed to denounce all those who do not recognise this mission; they know not the Father, for none can come to the Father save through the Son. And we end by asserting that the Father and the Son are one, that God could create nothing except through the Word, and that the Word was God. These oracles, which no doubt are profoundly pregnant, are not interpreted for us, as the parables, that hardly needed interpretation, sometimes are in the other Gospels. That which is new in *John*, and indispensable to any profound religion, is the influx of a great flood of contemplative rapture and mystic passion. Love fills the heart, faith transfigures events into symbols, and intuition brings everything home to the experience of the spirit.

This incongruity between occasion and style, between drama and

dialectic, in *John* marks a conjunction of heterogeneous traditions, somewhat as in Josephus, who makes Moses address the Israelites in the desert in the style of a Greek general addressing his mercenaries. So this Alexandrian vocabulary, adopted to convey an acceptable message to a Hellenistic public, becomes an opaque medium for us, who demand concrete images and psychological realism. Yet realism and subtle truth to life are not wanting in *John*. Perhaps to-day we are no less out of sympathy with dramatic acts than with oracular language, but that was not the case in other days with mankind at large. *John*, for instance, tells us how Christ after the Last Supper, *laid aside his garments . . . and began to wash his disciples' feet*. Such an impulsive, hyperbolical action, on what he knew was the eve of his crucifixion, and the very night on which these disciples were all to abandon him, surely speaks volumes to anyone who possesses *intelletto d'amore*. It is excessive for a man; but when God is in that man, proportions are abolished. Persons, opinions, the standards of the world, lose their conventional values; and radical impulses and ultimate truths reassert their supremacy. What difference could there be, for God, between one level of finite dignity and another, one depth or another of ignorant folly? That which he would be choosing and embracing, from the divine point of view, would be rather the plight of temporal animal existence in its irrational essence, the pervasive suffering, the uncertainty, and the love, shadowed by terror, that run through all life.

Thus the finite nature chosen, once chosen, will be enacted with passion. The humanity of Christ has been adopted by him, not feigned; he endures the darkness and the plight of it; he thinks in its special images and words; yet the latent knowledge of his divinity shines through those accidents and through that assumed character. If sometimes, in *John*, this latent divinity seems to chill and to neutralise the feelings natural to a man, at other times, on the contrary, it renders the acceptance and expression of those feelings more impulsive and entire. The ancients, who were less conceited than we, felt that if God was to become incarnate in

matter, he might as willingly take the form of a bull or hawk as that of a man: and the same equidistance from deity appears in the various predicaments and stations proper to mankind. Into whatever character he assumes, God enters with a divine freedom; and he astonishes us by being more radically human than we, in our entanglements, have the courage to be.

John contains another most subtle illustration of this in the scene at the marriage of Cana. Christ has already begun to choose his disciples, but is still attached to his family circle, and accompanies his mother to a wedding, at a rich man's house. She seems to be on very friendly terms with the family and in their confidence. In the midst of the feast the wine gives out, and she says to her son: *They have no wine. Jesus saith unto her* (according to the Authorised Version), *What have I to do with thee? Mine hour is not yet come.* The Evangelist tells us later that this is the first miracle that Jesus wrought: but we need not take the language of these traditions strictly: Mary would not have appealed to Jesus so pregnantly, had she not been aware of many, perhaps of continual, miracles wrought by him in private. But this was to be his first public and, as we should say, sensational miracle. So the first phrase in Christ's answer, if the Authorised Version be accepted, seems strange in the mouth of a son speaking to his mother, and even improper. But if we revise the translation and read: *What is that to me and to thee?* the words mark a reversion in Christ, in the midst of a crowded feast, to the sense of his incomparable origin and dignity. The same detachment and disdain of earthly ties appear in other passages, and they are natural in any young man with a vocation, especially of a poetic or ascetic kind. In *Luke* when the child Jesus remains in the temple without his parents' knowledge, his mother says: *Son, why hast thou thus dealt with us? Behold, thy father and I have sought thee sorrowing. And he said unto them, How is it that ye sought me? Wist ye not that I must be about my Father's business?* Here too, if applied to the immediate scene, the replies of Christ seem harsh and unreasonable: the cryptic reason for them appears only when we perceive that he is

living in another sphere, where our social acquaintances and their small worries have no place, and even our earthly parents have no claim upon us. But in *Luke*, though the language is more moderate, no hint is given of any underlying understanding and tenderness; whereas in *John* these are most subtly and dramatically conveyed. When Mary says, *They have no wine*, a whole background of intimate sympathies is disclosed to us between mother and son, and between them and their neighbours. And this not merely in great or sad or religious matters. The occasion is trivial, even comic: the host has underestimated the drinking power of his guests. But Mary, though full of grace and living a secret life in her heart, is an amiable lady. Her friends confide in her their little troubles. And Jesus, too, for all his inscrutable abstraction, loves common people, feels their slightest predicaments, will work a miracle to remove a minor trouble or (as in the case of the barren fig tree) to express a passing chagrin. When his mother says, *They have no wine*, he understands what he is asked to do and knows that he will do it. So does she: and his rude words do not offend her. They are a cry from his distracted heart, from his enslaved divinity. He feigns a denial, he even feigns a fact, when he adds: *Mine hour is not yet come*. It had come; he was about to work his first public miracle. Yet this was mere by-play: partly banter, partly the natural love of a young man to be independent. The tragedy lay behind this festive scene. He was consenting to a small kindness, when the premonition of torment and of glory filled his whole sky.

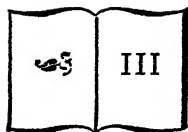
Wonderful, too, are other details. Mary, understanding perfectly her son's consent conveyed by a feigned refusal, instructs the servants to do whatever he shall bid them. They fill the water-pots with water up to the brim. *And he saith to them, Draw now, and bear unto the governor of the feast*. Then one final touch, a royal touch; the miraculous wine is of superior quality. Christ knows how to be king on earth as well as in heaven.

It may be observed in this episode as in many others that great as was the love that Christ often inspired, it was no simple or easy destiny to love him. It brought great trouble. It made you, not

afraid of him, but afraid of yourself. He admitted love, recognised it, even demanded it on one occasion from Peter with a triple reiteration, at once solemn and reproachful. With some he even allowed acts of spontaneous affection and familiarity, as with the beloved disciple and Mary Magdalene. Yet even these who possessed his open favour sometimes found him stern, and wondered why he checked or rebuked movements of theirs, of which he surely knew the innocent motive. Not that he was cold, or stinted his love, but that his superhuman preoccupations made him appear unyielding and rapt in incommunicable thoughts. In a word Jesus was difficult to please, impossible to count on pleasing. When he praised, he praised warmly, as when he forgave he forgave generously; but these were surprising graces, not to be reckoned upon by merely doing one's best. They were regal judgments falling from heaven and lifting the lover's soul there, beyond his understanding or his hopes.

The same delicate insight that appears at the marriage in Cana appears in other anecdotes, such as the scenes with Mary Magdalene, with the Samaritan woman, and with the woman taken in adultery. Love is not merely preached by this Evangelist; it is understood. His claim to be the disciple that Jesus loved is well maintained in all the narrative part of this Gospel: only in the long mystical discourses do we seem to hear a different voice. I have suggested that these represent the sublime truths present to Christ's mind amid the confusion of earthly accidents: but even so they are not satisfying. Though impressive they are not clear, and require interpretation in a system of theology that lies beyond the scope of the Gospels.

The idea of Christ in *John*, even if it be earlier than that in *Luke*, is certainly more mature and philosophical. It confesses its ideal character. It fructifies within the worshipper, enlightens his spirit, guides him towards his own purification and towards a just love of all other souls. And in both Gospels we see the idea of Christ, pictorially and mystically, in the act of being transformed from that of a lost leader into that of an object of worship.



THE MESSIAH

The idea of Christ is much older than Christianity. It is a prophetic idea; and even in the Gospels the affirmation that Jesus was the Christ remains an article of faith which only the fulfilment of a further prophecy would justify. Jesus could not possibly have been the Christ if he had not risen from the dead, ascended into heaven, and were not about to come again, amid clouds of glory, to judge the world and restore the kingdom of David.

For the word Christ was not the name of a person but of an office or dignity: the Messiah or the Christ would be whatever man God should choose and anoint to be his viceregent on earth. To be anointed was a sacramental rite by which a king was made king forever. He might conceivably be eclipsed, like Saul; yet the unction that had once consecrated him could not be washed away. A mysterious aura henceforth would surround him, and even in disguise or in desolation he would remain every inch a king. The Messiah would also be such by divine appointment, even before he was actually reigning, since God in his omniscient providence would already have chosen and predestined him to be anointed king.

It was therefore not inconceivable that the Messiah should exist undiscovered, perhaps undiscovered even to himself; and for a century or two before the time of Christ the Jews had been anxiously looking for him to deliver them from Greek and Roman

domination. Claimants might emerge from any quarter, yet there were certain recognised conditions that the Messiah was expected to fulfil: he must be, as prophecies were interpreted, a descendant of David born in Bethlehem, and he must restore the Kingdom of Judah by miraculous if not by military means. It was not easy to bring the idea of Christ in the Gospels to conform to these conditions, either in the letter or in the spirit: yet with faith and goodwill it could be managed. The spirit of the age helped, because it was growing more and more religious and inclined to symbolic interpretations of material events.

There was, indeed, one conception of the Messiah, perhaps the primitive Jewish conception, that was radically incompatible with the Evangelists' idea of Christ. According to that early conception the Messiah would be some worthy God-fearing man, a soldier or prophet, or both at once, whose virtues and achievements would incline God to accept him and confirm him as leader of his people. Such a man would have *deserved* to become the Messiah, somewhat as Napoleon deserved to become emperor of the French. A Jewish Napoleon would not have been at all out of character: David himself had been a self-made king; a fact that by no means would have prevented him from saying and thinking that it was God who had given him his skill with the sling and his other victories. Had not the prophet Samuel chosen and anointed him in his youth by divine inspiration? Religion in a man of action, intelligent but unspeculative, may well become a symbol for that complete dependence on fortune and fate of which he is well aware. Fate does not exclude, but envelops, his own will and initiative. So Napoleon requested or compelled the Pope to come and crown him emperor; yet during the ceremony, at the crucial moment, he snatched the crown from the Pope's hands and placed it on his own head.

Now after the Exile and under Greek and Roman domination, the relations of Israel with the world had completely changed, and the kingdom could not be expected to come except by miracle: God would have to play a more dynamic part in it than that of a Samuel

or a Pius the Seventh. And in the books of Daniel and of Enoch it had already been revealed that the Messiah pre-existed in heaven, and would be sent down to clear the ground for the New Jerusalem, which would itself descend ready built from above, as described by Ezekiel. For the Evangelists this pre-existence of the Messiah was imperative, since they identified him with a man who had already lived and died, had ascended into heaven and was now sitting there at the right hand of God. It would be only at his second coming that his Messiahship would be manifest: during his first life it had remained a secret, except at rare moments, in some vision or to the eye of faith. This concealment was indeed pregnant with a religious significance and truth far outrunning the grosser Jewish conception of the Messiah; yet the traditional conception could not be rejected by the Evangelists in its essence, because it formed the foundation of their whole gospel. *These things, they tell us, are written that ye might believe that Jesus is the Christ.*

The Gospels begin by renewing the prophecy and the summons of John the Baptist: the cataclysm approaching, the possibility of surviving it, and the appointed means for that salvation remain the same. Yet the prophecy now contains a retrospective element: namely, that the Messiah had already come, and had come in the person of Jesus who had been crucified. This bold paradox was partly explained by reassuring the Jewish mind that this had been only the first advent of Christ. *You shall see*, Jesus says to the High Priest, *the Son of Man sitting on the right hand of the power of God, and coming with the clouds of heaven.*

Yet the Christian Prelude to the Last Day was no mere episode, occasioned by some untoward complication in the circumstances. It was a revelation of the true meaning of salvation, involving a complete revolution in morals. Salvation was not to come by the clash of armies nor by a new Deluge nor by a better government of mankind. It was to come by suffering itself, repentance itself, martyrdom itself. When humility is seen to be the true path to

glory, glory itself changes its colour. It becomes self-forgetfulness, love, and peace. Jesus had loved the poor; and the poor, in loving Jesus, would lose the craving to become rich. They would find that in dismissing that craving, and all other cravings, they had entered paradise. This was the esoteric spiritual transformation wrought by the gospel within the official setting of the Jewish prophecies concerning the Kingdom of God.

A legal orthodoxy is thus maintained by all the Evangelists, but with a complete change of spirit. To establish the kingdom, or rather the reign, of God all political instrumentalities are discarded, and no tempting material benefits are promised. On earth they are to expect little else than tribulations and trials. Even in their spiritual life all will not be joy and comfort: but the more heroically they accept all manner of suffering, the less that suffering will avail to trouble their inner peace, and the greater part of their soul will live already in heaven. And that heavenly life, if ever they pass altogether into it, will not be anything that it has entered into the carnal heart of man to conceive. But they will have been saved. He who enters heaven once has entered it forever. The memory of guilt will have lost all its sting, and death and life all their terrors. The truth of all things will be as clear and beautiful to him as it is to God.

Jewish orthodoxy is formally respected also in regard to the person of Christ. He is represented as legally descended from David; yet Jewish sentiment is reversed, not to say outraged, by professing at the same time that in reality he was born of a virgin and, at least in that material miraculous sense, was a son of God. So too he was duly born in Bethlehem, but in a stable; and as if to prove that his future kingdom, as well as his origin, was not of this world, the heavens from which he came descended with him in the songs of angels. The secret of his disguised presence is not revealed to the high priests or the Scribes, but to a few shepherds who come to worship him in the manger, or to certain wise men of the east, who see the star of the new-born

deity in the heavens and hasten to honour him with the gifts due to a king: an ominous miracle, prophesying that this Messiah was not to reign over the Jews but over the Gentiles. Except for these obscure premonitions, Christ will live unknown and unrecognised. He will do nothing and plan nothing to re-establish the kingdom of Judah; and when at last he appears in a remote province it will be only to preach the coming Kingdom of Heaven to fishermen and to heal the sores and drive out the devils that torment the poor. Towards the Roman authorities he will be disdainfully submissive as if the political independence of Israel were a matter of no importance; and if he inveighs against the Scribes and Pharisees, it will be only because their piety is formal and self-righteous, and not animated by a genuine love of God and of man, such as inspired his own life and prompted those continual acts of mercy which broke through the disguise of his divinity. Yet what were such scattered pardons and cures but islets in the sea of human degradation and suffering? Society, as it was, both Jewish and pagan, was beyond all cure: it had to be abolished, and its end was at hand. Only the souls of individuals could be saved, if they renounced the world, believed in Christ, and learned to live like him in direct dependence on God and communion with him. Whenever this occurred, God's will was already being done on earth as it is in heaven, and the reign of God had already begun among men.

Even here, however, Christ was walking in the beaten path of Hebrew orthodoxy. All the prophets had freely denounced traditional practice in the name of a fresh and personal revelation. The ritual enjoined all manner of scrupulous sacrifices, yet Samuel had cried: *To obey is better than sacrifice*. Hosea could go a step further, and say in the name of the Lord, *I will have mercy and not sacrifice*. Finally Isaiah could exaggerate and exclaim: *Incense is an abomination unto me*.¹ The same spir-

¹ Compare Newman, *Development of Christian Doctrine*, pp. 65, 66.

itual heaven may be seen at work in the mind of the Evangelists, without any formal rejection of the old dispensation or of the new. The first disciples were all Jews. It was impossible for them to change at once their rooted presuppositions and standards. They were not insensible to the new intuitions, they accepted these too; what profit could there be in fundamentally renouncing anything, much less in renouncing all things? An immediate unregenerate lust for security, pleasure, or eminence might be suppressed for the time being. These were their days of militancy and trial; but the love of victory and power was not radically abolished. It would revive and be hyperbolically satisfied at the last day. First they must triumph over themselves, then they would triumph over the whole world. They would then have richly merited to sit on the right and on the left hand of glory. The cross would have been the means of gaining heaven, and living there forever in gorgeous bliss.

A subtler and more radical transformation may be traced in the idea of the Messiah as it passes into the Christian idea of Christ. John the Baptist had been a prophet of the kingdom. The call for repentance implied that God was coming to punish; and those who came to be baptised came fleeing from the wrath of God. Repentance and baptism would prepare the elect to turn away that wrath on the great day. Thus the Baptist's message, like all the old prophecies, though essentially a warning and a denunciation, became also a promise of salvation. Salvation would be exceptional, but was possible for every man, on one revolutionary condition. Being a good Jew and strictly keeping the Law would not be enough. There must be a change of heart, a complete new birth of the soul, which baptism symbolised. And it is evident that if this purely moral and psychological metanoia was alone required, it opened the kingdom to any repentant Gentile, and of itself changed Judaism in principle into Christianity.

It did so in principle, as a theory of salvation, but not yet

in form or in spiritual quality, as a living religion; for if we stopped at John the Baptist we should have a Christianity without Christ. The Baptist had been a precursor of the kingdom rather than of the Messiah. There would, of course, be a Messiah, but about his identity John seems to have been in the dark. From the Jewish point of view the question necessarily remained open until the Messiah should be actually manifested by the restoration of the kingdom. We are told that John sent some of his disciples to Jesus to inquire whether he was the one that should come, or whether they should look for another; and the answer they received was only an enumeration of the wonders that Jesus was working. A discreet answer; because it indicated that Jesus had divine powers, but did not say that these powers would avail, or that he would attempt to use them to restore the kingdom in the expected way.

There was also the ancient superstition of the scapegoat, when by a sort of exorcism the curses hanging over the people's heads could be removed and heaped upon a single animal, that would then be driven out of bounds to perish in the desert: and something of the same kind subsisted in the idea of sin-offerings and other sacrifices. Now, when the hopes that Jesus might prove to be the Messiah were dashed by his death, but revived by his resurrection, those elements in the Hebrew prophecies became the seeds of a great revelation. Before the Messiah could come down from heaven with power to establish a new kingdom he should first have come down in humbler form to suffer and die for the forgiveness of all human sins. Jesus had been the Christ in this first sacrificial and propitiatory form of his manifestation; the final glorious form of it would appear presently at his second advent.

This discovery turned the terrible paradox of a crucified Messiah into a fervent religion of gratitude and love. The Passion of Christ became the greatest of tragedies and the most sublime: God offering himself in sacrifice for the sins of his creatures. And not in sacrifice only. The judicial theory of the atonement appears fully

developed in the *Epistle to the Romans*, and also the theory of grace; yet it plays no great part in the Gospels. In the Eucharist Christ leaves indeed a memorial of his body and blood, that have been offered up for the salvation of many: but here we soon pass from Saint Paul to Saint John, from rabbinical logic to mystical sentiment; and now Christ comes to save us by giving us himself, by assimilating himself to us enough to assimilate us a little to him, not by paying into a mythical counting-house so many drops of blood for so many miserable sins. The justice of that heavenly Shylock rested on a legal bond, but now it has yielded to a tenderer mystery. The kingdom that Christ came to found is not of this world: it is an invisible kingdom, an unexampled life in the spirit. He had taken the human form so that he might be not only a teacher or a ruler but also an example: and he had chosen to suffer and to die before being glorified, because he knew that suffering and death were allotted to the spirit in us also, and he wished first to endure and surmount them, lest he should seem to impose on others a martyrdom that he had not accepted for himself.

This radically mystical and gnostic doctrine is broached here and there in the Gospels, but balanced by other elements drawn from Jewish tradition. Had the new insight become predominant, Christianity might have discarded Jewish eschatology altogether, as well as the resurrection of the flesh, and even the humanity of Christ; although this last might have proved a suicidal step, since it would have robbed the idea of Christ of all its moral appeal and significance, and reduced Christian faith to a vapid ontology.

From this fate the Church was saved not only by the ineradicable Jewish traditions of the Apostles but by its own organic necessities. To be a spirit without a body is as impossible for the Church as for the believer. Both doctrine and regimen have to be defined, organised and made obligatory. The Church was hardly born when it had to begin to collect money, to debate points of dis-

cipline, to settle quarrels between the leaders and to excommunicate recalcitrant members. Saint Paul himself was a miracle of activity, travelling, preaching, consulting, founding churches, denouncing heretics and writing voluminous and impassioned letters. In vain is salvation proclaimed to be a matter of sudden and undeserved grace, or of faith without works, and love to be better than all preternatural gifts and prophetic mouthings. Mouthings and miracles cannot be dispensed with; and the elect inevitably gather into an agitated, angry and prepotent sect, with aggression abroad, inquisition at home, and intrigue everywhere. Love is not thereby banished: it often reappears, but only to soften judgment and wrath, or to be invoked theoretically as their ultimate justification. Did not Dante read over the gate of the *Inferno*: *Fecemi . . . 'l primo amore?*

Nature cannot be intrinsically contrary to spirit, otherwise spirit could never have become incarnate in Christ or more or less in all sensitive animals. But, genetically, nature must come first and spirit afterwards; and when the Church became, as was inevitable and requisite, a part of the world, spirit in it could not retain its primacy. Even if the world beyond the pale could be disregarded, which is never the case, an organised Church becomes a world in itself. It posits matter and time, exercises power, sets up authorities, piles up commitments, and is as rich in prohibitions and compulsions as any secular society. Moreover, in the Christian system, eschatology and the ultimate physical triumph of justice with hyperbolic rewards and punishments remained standing: so that if the early disciples were rebuked by Christ in the Gospels for their competitive ambition to sit on thrones and be the first in the kingdom, this could be only because the quality of their ambition was not spiritual enough. Concern for their salvation, with the desire and hope of glory, could not be blamed in them in principle.

Nevertheless the spiritual leaven that tended to transmute all thought into self-forgetfulness and all prayer into vision, continued to work in the lump. Salvation could never come by a change in

circumstances. It could come only by a profound transformation of the will and the affections, a new understanding and self-transcending love, such as may fill the soul in its supreme moments. Guided by memories or reported sayings of Jesus, or by their own increasing sense for spiritual things, the Evangelists expressed that idea in their picture of his person. He was God in man. He had only to lift the veil between the two chambers in his own soul, in order to pass at will from the altar of sacrifice to the holy of holies.

Sundry influences were at work in the pagan world to facilitate this transition from the Hebrew Messiah to the Christian Christ. One of these influences was philosophy: not, of course, philosophy of the modern academic kind, but the enacted personal philosophy or enlightened life of the ancients, who in all their schools practised some discipline of the spirit, some scorn of the passions and some method of subduing fancy to reason. Christ could never have attracted the faith and love of that dissolving world, if he had seemed less heroic than the Stoic sage, less detached than the Sceptic, or less sensitive and human than the poetic Epicurean. His Judaism could be forgiven, because spiritually he so completely transcended it. Being a man, he had to be a man of some nation; and the garment of oriental diction and patriarchal ethos was not unbecoming for a pilgrim god.

Another influence was more subtle and internal to the Christian family. This family was soon segregated both from the Jewish body and from the pagan world, but the more numerous the Christians became, the less likely it was that they should all be saints. Even the saints were often eccentric and dangerous to the unity of the Church. It became important that the whole consistent Christian idea of sanctity should be kept publicly in view, clarified, concretely illustrated, and made perfect in contrast to the laxity of the many and the one-sidedness of the few. The idea of Christ in the Gospels came to serve this purpose. His history, his person, his maxims were all presented dramatically and interpreted spiritually. Something celestial was seen descending to earth at every moment,

until the earthly side of things was sanctified, and only their spiritual side seemed to be substantial and to carry on the action.

Thus the great paradoxes in asserting that Jesus had been the Christ—his humble advent, his obscure life, his ignominious death—ceased to be difficulties and became revelations. His whole career on earth had been interpolated in the divine scheme of the universe for a merciful and saving reason. It was both a warning and a lesson. John the Baptist had preached repentance and a change of heart: Christ had shown us into what the heart was to be changed. He had given in his life and maxims a perfect example of that consecration, humility, chastity, and charity which were the very essence of regeneration. To believe in him and to follow him was to be saved indeed, not by an arbitrary decree of Providence, but by an inner and intrinsic necessity. Our sacrifice would be our liberation, because that which we had renounced was only a mass of vices and sorrows. Jesus had been the true Christ precisely because he did not fulfil literally the promises of the prophets—a fulfilment which would have been only a complication of vanities—but founded a gnostic religion, revealing the secret of that spiritual universe which those prophecies had signified in barbaric symbols.



THE SON OF GOD

The idea of Christ in the Gospels, when completely developed, thus remains true in outline to the original prophecies of a Messiah. Eschatologically, it comes not to destroy but to fulfil. Yet this fulfilment is so unexpected, so manifold, so subversive, and so intimate that morally and dramatically the idea is totally transfigured. The son of David has become the son of God.

What exact meaning has this phrase, "the son of God," so persistently used in the Gospels? There are passages in the Hebrew Scriptures in which the Israelites in a body are called children of God, apparently a tenderer variant for the people of God, or the chosen people; and there are passages in the Gospels where, by implication at least, all men are called children of God, since God is addressed or spoken of as their father. This expression, as it falls from the lips of Jesus, belongs to the idyllic and poetic side of his teaching. God is the father of all things, not of men only, nor of good men only, nor of Israel only. He rules over the creation, which he did not produce casually, in a playful mood, and then abandon and forget. He watches over his creatures in all their vicissitudes, as a father over his children. I shall return to this point later and to the questions that it suggests. Here there is a particular circumstance to consider.

Christ, according to the unanimous conviction of the Evangelists, was the son of God in a mysterious supernatural sense. To be God's

son would be his essential relation to God even after he had returned to found his kingdom on earth or had carried his elect back with him to his Kingdom in Heaven. Some of them had actually seen him transfigured into his proper celestial aspect: all had seen him risen from the dead and moving in an ethereal medium not the common light of day. Now, for one who was thus materially and uniquely the son of God, the name of father given to God had a force and a warmth altogether personal; so that in teaching men to call God their father, and to put themselves in his hands with the trust of children, Christ was not merely using an oriental figure of speech, but was raising his disciples by the hand towards his own station, to participation in an utterly superhuman intimacy and unanimity that existed between himself and God.

If, then, all men and all living beings were invited to regard themselves as children of God, such a non-natural adoption would remain merely verbal and empty unless it carried with it a corresponding change of heart in themselves, by which they might transcend their own littleness and begin to live with God after God's way, in the light of his omniscience and great designs, as Christ had always lived when he was in heaven and did not forget to live even when he became a man and was buffeted by all accidents of earth.

But whence came the force of that pleonastic idiom by which people spoke of the children of Israel, rather than of Israel simply, or of the son of man rather than of a man? It came from the evident consubstantiality or identity of nature between parents and offspring. The son of a man, in his nature and destiny, is as much a man as the father: his initial subjection and inferiority to his father is only temporary. The father himself was once a helpless child; the child is destined some day to be a father; and in the indefinite series of generations there is perfect parity in dignity and authority, between the manhood of one generation and the manhood of another. On this analogy, it would seem to follow that a son of God must be as much God as the father. And so it was in

the mythical genealogies of the gods in all nations. Zeus was as much a god as his father Cronos, and his sons were as much gods as he. The regal authority exercised by the father over his children in such cases was limited or even reversible: for circumstances varied with time in the primeval chaos which underlay all the gods and their fortunes; and fate might relegate the more ancient deities to obscurity and cosmic sleep, and summon younger ones to dwell for a while in the smiling earth, and to inspire it for a season with their particular genius. So each god might have his times and places for special manifestation and dominion; and it would be a shallow mind that would disparage the divinity of any spirit just emerging into the light or that of any spirit lost to sight and eclipsed in the twilight of antiquity.

Severely as such polytheism and naturalism had been banished from official Jewish religion, traces of it remained not only in popular superstitions but in the very jealousy attributed to Jehovah, in his special choice of one people and their special choice of him for their God; also fundamentally in the conception of his life in time, his tumultuous and changing thoughts, and his regal passions. He was conscious of rivals, he was wrathful at treason, he was ferocious in vengeance; yet the storm would pass from his soul as the thunder-clouds from Sinai or Ararat, and he would be generous in his favours and triumphantly true to his promises. Although the Jews had no philosophy of their own and no speculative insight, the love of hyperbole which they shared with all orientals drove them to the very verge of ultimate conceptions; and in this way their idea of Jehovah, though never made philosophical, grew absolute in its prerogatives. Their world was originally naturalistic: God manifested his power by transforming things from their normal character and movement, or normal quiescence; he had made the world by blowing like a strong wind over the waters. Yet gradually, if not by any sure antecedent prerogative, he tamed all the powers of nature, extended his dominion over all nations, and would maintain it for all time.

If God was conceived to live in this way through a series of events, actions, and opportune thoughts, and if he had a son, it seemed obvious that he must have begotten his son on some particular occasion. What could this occasion have been? The question would be idle as well as presumptuous, had we no other knowledge of this Son beyond this verbal revelation of his existence. But the Evangelists had begun as the Gospel of Saint Mark begins, by contact with the human Jesus or reports about him: that he was the Son of God had been a later discovery, or rather act of faith on their part; so that occasions were known to them on which this mystery had been revealed, and these occasions could suggest the character of that divine sonship which they disclosed. One occasion had been the baptism of Jesus, when a voice was heard from heaven saying: *This is my beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased*. Could it have been at that moment that the Son of God was generated, a spirit identified with the man Jesus and, as it were, infused into him? Was he perhaps the new spirit given to each human soul upon regeneration? This would be a promising suggestion for free and unconverted minds, building their own religion out of their private experience or imagination; but it was contrary to the orthodox tradition among those who were looking for the Messiah. The Messiah was to be a single person with a public destiny; he would become the King of the Jews; and if being a son of God was a dignity proper to the Messiah, it belonged to him exclusively and by predestination. It could not be conferred upon him after he existed but only revealed gradually to be essentially his nature.

Might not Christ then have been the Son of God because, at his incarnation without an earthly father, he was commissioned to be the Messiah in an enlarged and spiritual sense, to save the souls that would believe in him, and with these elect found an everlasting kingdom? On this hypothesis the use of the words "father" and "son," which must be metaphorical in speaking of the deity, would be rendered intelligible. The child Jesus had an earthly mother, but only a foster-father; God had intervened by a special

miracle at his conception, sending an angel to announce the event to the Virgin Mary, and the Holy Ghost to overshadow her, and cause her to conceive. That child was therefore the son of God in a most real and exceptional sense. I am not sure that if the strict idea of eternity had ever penetrated into Christian theology (as it could not do on account of the Jewish foundations of that discipline) this view of the generation of the Son by the Father might not have become orthodox. Seen as an emanation of the deity such generation could not be an event with a date; it would signify only an *essential* derivation of one person or hypostasis from the other, as the corollaries of a proposition flow essentially from that proposition. The Son of God, if God were eternal and not merely expected to be everlasting, would therefore have been generated from all eternity, yet not *temporarily before* any event, and therefore not before the incarnation of Jesus Christ. At that moment the Son of God began to exist in the world of events, in union with the human psyche of Christ, which belonged essentially to that world. The metaphor by which the eternal relation of the first to the second person of the Trinity is called a relation of Father to Son would be based on this personal identity of the second person with the human Christ. Christ had a mother, and it was natural that, orphaned as he was of an earthly father, and an exile in the world, he should have given the name of Father to his essential source in the eternal sphere, to which his eyes could not help turning with a sense of strange separation in fundamental union.

Reverting, however, to the temporalism of Scripture and of safe Christian orthodoxy, we must discard this suggestion, and insist that the Son of God existed *before* his incarnation, existed, that is, in heaven. Heaven is described in the later Hebrew scriptures as full of angels. Might not the Son of God be the name of one, let us say, the first and greatest of these angels? And was it not this angel that God sent into the world in the person of Jesus?

Such a possibility was congruous with accepted ways of thinking; and the language of the Gospels, which was inevitably vague and

timid on theoretical points, lent itself to such interpretation. It had some vogue in subsequent heresies but there was an insurmountable obstacle in its way for veritable disciples of Christ. It contradicted the sudden impression and the permanent magic of the *idea of Christ*, as the Church transmitted it and as the Evangelists, in their moving narratives and maxims, helped to keep it alive. In two distinct ways this living image of Christ was radically not that of an angel. In the first place, Christ was remembered or conceived to have been a man, a child, a youth, a young inspired healer and preacher, living continually with his disciples, jostled by crowds, rich in individual initiative and bursts of tenderness, and above all, in the end, seized by his enemies, tormented and crucified. Nothing could have been more tragically different from the apparition of an angel, an ethereal messenger, intangible, serene, uttering a few oracular words, and vanishing into thin air. In the second place, though a man, Christ had exerted superhuman powers, betrayed a hidden omniscience, corrected and refined the law of Moses with absolute authority. If he had not explained and revealed everything, his disciples felt that it was because they were not able to understand everything, not because he lacked the knowledge; and if he did not transform the world at once, but consented to fail and to suffer, it had been in obedience to the plan laid out for him by his Father—not for lack of power. When his heart moved him, when his conscience consented, he could break through all trammels. He was therefore no angel, no mere ray lost in space of divine light and power, but a centre of light and power, a focus of divinity, derived certainly from the Father, but equally living, and clothed with all the Father's authority. He was the heir-apparent; and though a man and diffident about his native divinity, he was the Son of God.

This divinity felt to radiate from the image of Christ, joined with the theoretical convenience of classing him among the angels, suggested another solution that also had a great vogue among the Eastern Christians. If in later Judaism angels had been imagined to

fill the court of heaven, and to stand before the Throne like guards or pages, or like priests before the altar, yet in earlier Hebrew traditions angels had often been direct theophanies. It was God himself that spoke; but if he appeared in a visible form, he was spoken of as an angel. The angel was merely the form he wore to the human senses. Christ might have been such an apparition of God. This would do full justice to all the authority, power and mysterious ascendancy exercised by the person of Christ; but it would do away with the human Jesus altogether, except as an optical illusion. Or if this seemed too fantastic, a human Jesus might be admitted as an *alias* for Christ, an individual whose aspect Christ might have borrowed on occasion, but whose birth, daily life, passion, and death Christ would never have undergone. Christ would have been God simply, God walking on earth as he had walked in the garden of Eden in the cool of the evening, and there would never have been a human Christ.

This solution lends itself admirably to the spiritual and mystical elaboration of Christian experience, from Saint Paul down. Christ and the Holy Spirit are felt as forces at work within us, as the transforming grace of God: and the historical, legendary, and ontological questions about Jesus and about the Trinity disappear or can be easily solved. In our day the mythologists among Biblical critics, who deny that Jesus ever existed, burden themselves with a needless historical paradox; but they retain a true understanding of the religious imagination and of the vital sources of religious faith and dogma. Facts, real physical persons or events, are of no religious importance except as the imagination may be stimulated by them and may clothe them with a spiritual meaning. The humanity of Christ is an indispensable dogma for the Christian believer; it is not a necessary postulate for the historian of Christian belief. A material Jesus may have given occasion for that belief to take shape among a small group of his followers, who hoped he might be the Messiah; he may have supplied a date, a place, a few characteristic sayings, to form a nucleus for their common prophe-

cies and precepts; but if these disciples held together, if their crude notions caught fire and converted whole classes of men of various races and religions, this could only be because they filled out and transformed their recollections of the historical Jesus into the religious idea of Christ, a divine redeemer, an infallible teacher, a knower and lover of each individual soul. The process of transformation and completion would have begun at once in the mind and talk of the disciples, even when their master was alive: and it would have continued ever since in the mind of the Church, groping and stumbling amid heretical choices or blind alleys, until the full-fledged doctrine and cultus of Christianity had taken a tenable and adequate shape. This development may be attributed by the scoffer to the avid imagination of poor ignorant and starving souls; but it will be attributed by these souls themselves to divine inspiration.

Now this inspiration had touched one of its highest points when it had pronounced Christ to be the Son of God; but if this revelation was interpreted to mean that God himself had appeared in the guise of man, as he had appeared to the patriarchs in the guise of an angel, the appeal of Christian faith to the human conscience was jeopardised. There are plenty of theophanies for the poet: the stars, the thunder, the winds, the flowers, the beauty of men and women to the lover, when he thinks he sees a god or a goddess walking through the world. The point is to hold, verify, maintain one of these theophanies to be a literal fact, not a poetic illusion; in this case to be assured that Christ is not merely a theophany, a vision of God in human shape, but is God in a real man, a man really one with God. It was requisite for the religious adequacy of the gospel that the humanity of Christ should not evaporate and leave only the godhead standing in its impassibility.

The direction in which this demand might find satisfaction is indicated in the fourth Gospel. We have already seen how the humanity and the divinity of Christ are interwoven in that book, both with graphic power and with mystical unction. Yet the explicit doctrine of the Trinity is not broached there: it was still too

soon. Such language would have sounded polytheistic, and monotheism had to be safeguarded at all costs before the godhead of the Son could be proclaimed without blasphemy. I think even the laboured and hectic language of the Athanasian creed hardly avoids confusion: we see that an ineffable mystery confronts us, that various phrases are justified about it by various considerations, but we do not see how these phrases hang together and escape contradiction. Yet a path towards clearness was open, if only the Evangelists and the Fathers could have trodden it: the path from time to eternity.

God, all the doctors of the Church tell us, is eternal, and in some doctors this idea of eternity is pure, involving timelessness and changelessness: something altogether different in kind from everlasting duration. Aristotle and Plotinus had conceived God to be strictly eternal and yet eminently living, the very quintessence and absolute intensity of life. Yet that life was changelessly sustained without lapse or rhythm, without division between before and after, between vision and judgment, between purpose and act. Such stability is indeed contrary to physical being or existence, which involves sources and results, process and changing external relations; but stability is essential to moral or intellectual terms, which would have no meaning if they had no constancy. Logicians, therefore, when they speak mythologically, say that all things are generated by the One; for they see that unity is the condition *sine qua non* of ideal being. But unity is not a substance that can suffer change or flow out materially. When it is said to be the principle of all life, the meaning is that all life arises under the constant condition of taking some recognisable form and maintaining some recognisable rhythm. The One is the life and the light of the universe, because all things arise by virtue of their unity, as colours grow distinct in the sunlight, with no blinking in the sun. In this way we discover that nothing can exist in time without borrowing its being from eternity.

These considerations are dialectical and it is almost an accident

that philosophers should have spoken in their theology of the One and the Eternal, and so seemed to confirm the Hebrew zeal for one only God and he everlasting. Yet nothing could be more remote than the dialectical One from the monarchical, planning, working, speaking, avenging, covenanting and repenting God of the Old Testament. And it was only the God of the patriarchs that could plausibly be called Father or be supposed to have a son; only the God who sent the Deluge might now send a Messiah. Much, therefore, as Jewish and Christian theology might be assimilated to Platonism, contact between the two traditions, not to speak of fusion, is possible only on one condition: that Platonism be viewed not on its dialectical and idealistic side, but as a system of cosmology, which it also was; and then its myths, taken as inspired revelations concerning matters of fact, might be accepted, with corrections, by theologians as happy guesses at the truth, or premonitions of it.

Aristotle's system, apparently less religious, is really far more consonant with Christianity than that of Plato. Introduce occasional divine intervention with the course of nature, introduce grace accentuating in spots the universal dominance of teleology, and you may turn Aristotle into a Christian philosopher. He does not undermine the needful contrast and interplay between the natural and the supernatural, as Plato does by rendering both poetical; whereas for orthodox Christianity it is indispensable that both should exist realistically, with empirical transitions and deviations between them: so that Elijah, Christ, and the Virgin Mary may already have been carried bodily into heaven, where all of us, with our bodies, may hope to join them.

Now the little that Aristotle tells us about God is of the utmost value to the Christian theologian, because it confirms from a purely pagan philosophical point of view two fundamental characteristics of Jehovah: that he is unapproachably distinct from the creation, single, and eternal, and that he is intensely alive. This living essence of God, this tremor and vibration in his immutability, opens the

way for distinctions within his being. He may *think* (as the Platonic One certainly could not) and there may be tensions and harmonies in his life such as are expressed by the words "fatherhood" and "sonship." And here the eternity also predicated of God, far from contradicting the notion of such an internal relation within him, gives us a hint useful in interpreting the Gospels. Christ is the Son of God, and possessed of divine prerogatives; yet, as a son, he is derivative, obedient, not threatening, like so many a king's son, to usurp his father's throne. Rivalry and even patricide is possible in human families because the subordination of son to father, in an indefinite series of generations, is temporary and irksome to the growing youth, who knows himself to be his father's equal, and able to fill his father's place. Very likely the son is already a father too; in any case, he feels that each human soul is equally original, equally free, equally lordly. But in an *eternal* being, if there be a relation comparable to that between father and son, that contrast and generation must itself be perpetual. The Father will never have been a son: the Son will never become a father. The movement of derivation, the essential dependence, will never issue in a person similar to the Father or separable from him: and *vice versa*, the Father will never have existed or been able to exist without the quality of fatherhood or deprived of his Son. There will be but one life uniting the two; and while possessing the same divine nature (a child being of the same species as his parent) they will possess it in contrasting and not interchangeable phases. The Father is forever and constitutionally a father, and the Son is constitutionally and forever a son.

However bound up Christian theology might be with prophecy, and innocent of dialectic, it could not help appealing in the end to the notion of eternity. Even pagan theology, in Plato, Aristotle, and Plotinus had not been able to do so. For instance, in the *Phaedo* of Plato the occasion was a tragic event, and the interest seemed to hang on the possibility of defeating the blind verdict of the judges, and proving that the soul of Socrates would live on, in

spite of the death of his body. Yet in the end, after some flaw had been detected in all the naturalistic arguments for immortality, Socrates appeals to the *idea*, not to the circumstances, of life to prove its *eternal* freedom from death. This observation, in its own dialectical sphere, is irrefutable: but it eludes and even mocks the interest in the continued existence of any particular person. All it asserts is the truism that the life of Socrates can never be identical with his non-life, or non-existence. Under the form of eternity it will always be an exemplification of life.

If Plato, or Socrates himself, found comfort in this tautology, he is to be congratulated on the degree to which respect for the *truth*, essentially eternal, has overcome in his mind the animal impulse to go on living: an impulse which, after triumphing in a complete human life, is necessarily defeated. A timely and noble death, like that of Socrates, eternally crowns, far from destroying, his appointed existence. But hankering for continued life in other uncanny worlds, or in the form of some other animal, is a romantic weakness. The other worlds and other animal lives may actually exist: but in proportion as they differ from one's own life and character on earth, it is an illusion to call them continuations or antecedents to one's earthly adventure. Even transmigration can preserve a soul only in so far as some *ideal* continuity and sameness are traceable through the successive lives: so that the Buddhist reduction of metempsychosis to Karma rests on a just analysis. Time cannot endow you with immortality except as it may reenact your eternal identity.

How subtly this need of ideal and dialectical bonds, to hold the existential flux together, was felt by at least one of the Evangelists appears in the choice of the Word, the Logos, to designate the divine nature in Christ. The metaphor of the father and the son is temporal and naturalistic. Begetting is an action, and offspring, though they come from the substance of the parents, are poor and helpless worms in comparison. But an impulse, a passion, a thought uttered in a word positively gains by that manifestation: it discovers

itself, renders itself recognisable and memorable. Language and logic are the means by which spirit comes into self-possession: their physical usefulness in communication, when words become signals, is neither primary nor ultimate. Language grows out of music, which the birds have without yet turning it into a means of indicating distinct objects; and contact with objects, when at last it becomes safe and pleasant, serves only to fill the mind with images and insights, that is to say, with graphic signs flowering of themselves in the mind. It is therefore with extreme propriety that *John* begins by this oracle: *In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God.* This was a formula less offensive to Jewish ears than if he had said bluntly that Christ was God. Generation and birth *separate* the offspring from the parents; utterance *perfects* the parent by the offspring. As Goethe says:

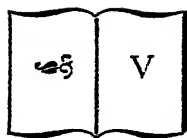
*Einzig veredelt die Form den Gehalt,
Verleiht ihm, verleiht sich, die höchste Gewalt.*

*Form first exalts the flux into the flower,
Lends it, and lends itself, consummate power.*

Thus the burden of the Will is clarified by the Word; through the Word all things were made into what they are; and from the reflection of the Will in the Word proceeds the Spirit. And thus the axiomatic unity of God, threatened by the allegory of sonship, was safeguarded by the allegory of expressed thought.

Nevertheless, when Christ himself is speaking the constant use of the terms "father" and "son" makes a profound appeal of another kind. The Son had now become a creature, had assumed the temporal and limited life of a man, with a human range and succession of perceptions. Certainly he retained his divine vision and peace *in petto*, yet out of reach, except by faith and prayer, for his human faculties, which played above them, as a dream disjointedly plays over the depths of a sleeping mind. Besides the essential subordi-

nation of the Son to the Father in eternity, there now was an acute and pathetic sense of dependence and obedience in the exiled and commissioned Word sent into the darkness of a world that could not understand it. The sense of separation overlay the sense of union, and though perfectly sure of being the Word of God, Christ was more immediately and cryingly aware of being his messenger, his momentarily banished and forsaken Son, sent on a vain mission to a far country. The Son of God, so oppressed by his accepted finitude, preferred to call himself the Son of Man.



THE SON OF MAN

That Christ was a man is everywhere presupposed in the Gospels and is represented as the obvious fact, as little doubtful to the disciples as to the public. Hence the wonder when he showed superhuman knowledge or power. *What manner of man is this*, say the good fishermen, *that the winds and the sea obey him?* Even the belief or the suspicion that he might be the Messiah assumed that he was a man. Angels and theophanies were never confused with the promised Messiah. What is more, even if the Messiah had come down from heaven in a cloud, as was sometimes expected, and as Christ himself prophesied that he should come at his second advent, he would have been a man and the son of man. Thus we read in *Daniel*: *Behold one like the son of man came with the clouds of heaven, and came to the Ancient of days . . . and there was given him dominion and glory and a kingdom, that all people, nations, and languages should serve him: his dominion is an everlasting dominion, which shall not pass away.* And in *Enoch* we learn that *the Chosen One of God now stands before God, and the name of the Son of Man was spoken before the Lord before the creation of the sun and the stars. He will be a staff to sustain the just, a light of the nations; before him shall bow all the peoples; in him dwells the spirit of wisdom . . . and of strength, and the spirit of them that have fallen asleep in righteousness.*

Such expectations about the "Son of Man" were indeed an

obstacle in the minds of the pious to regarding Jesus, a Galilean of known and humble origin, to be the Messiah: he was too human. In his practice of calling himself the Son of Man we may therefore see mixed intentions, and a trace of those double meanings and ironical metaphors by which, especially in *John*, he at once expresses and conceals his thoughts. On the one hand, being the Son of God and speaking of himself as the Son of Man, he maintained that reserve, that *disciplina arcani*, by which he protected himself from premature acclamations and premature conflicts. The phrase had a savour of modesty: it was literally correct, yet full of a subtle irony. Had he habitually called himself the Son of God, without transfiguring his whole aspect and action, he would have seemed arrogant and blasphemous, since he would have been understood to make himself equal to God. That, too, would have been literally correct, but in a qualified and mysterious sense impossible to explain to the public. And the title, the Son of Man, though more modest, was very far from implying any abdication of heavenly descent and superhuman status: rather it asserted these but indirectly, by a becoming understatement. The phrase was technically a synonym for the Messiah; yet it could hardly help suggesting that voluntary humanity and obscurity which the Son of God had chosen on coming into this world. It called to mind the miseries of mortality that paradoxically, in Christ's case, beset a divine being.

Whatever, then, we may think of the gnostic idea of Christ, or of any theory that tends to deny his humanity, such theories certainly contradict that idea in its initial form, as we find it reflected in the Gospels. Saint Paul himself, whose Christ is Jesus only, as it were, by accident, nevertheless means to preach nothing but Christ crucified: and such a Christ must have had a material human body and a genuine human soul to die that death. The religion of the Cross was bound, at all costs, to maintain the humanity of its founder.

From beginning to end, the Bible assumes that the universe is a system of bodies more or less animated by spirit. Concerning the

nature of body or spirit there is nowhere any speculation or analysis; but a healthy sense of reality keeps even the most imaginative flights from divorcing spirit from matter altogether. A striking consequence of this, in spite of the Jews having lived and learned a good deal in Egypt, was their indifference to immortality. Of vivid spiritual life without a body or without political society they seem to have had no desire. It was only in order not to miss the final triumph of Israel and dwell in the New Jerusalem that the more imaginative of them posited a resurrection from the dead.

This sentiment subsists throughout the New Testament. When the risen Christ appears, the urgent test is to prove that he is not a "spirit," that is a ghost, but a material body, that can be touched (or ought not yet to be touched) and that can eat and drink, although it may appear and vanish in ways as yet untraceable. And it is the resurrection of the body, not the immortality of the soul, that figures in the Christian creed. Essential then, to the orthodox and complete idea of Christ which we are studying is that he should be genuinely and frankly what he prefers to call himself in the Gospels, namely, the Son of Man. Such a condition involves many predicaments, each of which may seem arbitrary in itself, although it was inevitable that those predicaments, whatever they were, should be arbitrary. For instance, a man must be born in some particular age and country: he must find himself limited to a particular language, culture, and hereditary religion. Such limitations, and such a bias, may seem unworthy of God; yet if once we admit the conjunction of the two natures in one person (and it is only so that union with God is at all possible) all we can reasonably ask is that each nature should admit and desire the existence of the other. Now the humanity of Christ and his nationalism are his standing-ground, his point of departure: they do not form his horizon or his goal. That is all we can ask of any man, however mightily, however transfiguringly, God may dwell within him.

Moreover, the phase of Judaism in which Christ appears is a

phase of dissolution and disruption. Jacob is not now working his way to wealth and importance; Joshua is not attempting to exterminate the Canaanites because God had promised their lands to Abraham; Solomon is not emulating other oriental despots. On the contrary, John the Baptist is announcing the end of the world, calling the Jews a generation of vipers, and threatening them with destruction unless they repent, renounce all they are bent upon, and at least in spirit fly with him to the desert. In one sense destruction had already overtaken the Jewish nation: it had lost its independence politically, and intellectually it had been transmuted by the Greek language and philosophy. It subsisted on sufferance, was just enough alive not to be dead: the very moment, therefore, in which all its experience, all its spiritual fervour, could best migrate out of its earthly body, and become the seed of a heavenly life.

In the same way, Christ acknowledges the claims of his family and disciples upon his person. Initially he is faithful to them, and even at moments affectionate; yet with his eye and his heart fixed on ultimate bonds he denied them any spiritual privilege. Those who do the will of his Father who is in heaven are his mother and brethren and disciples. With a certain impatience of local and temporal accidents, he seems to lend himself more gladly to exotic sympathies. He *prefers* low company, for the sake of a certain bitter realisation of his humanity: it is the proud, who think themselves superior to the poor and to the sinful, that rouse his ire. He endures his stupid disciples more willingly than he does the reasoning and virtuous Pharisees. But in this there is no shadow of sentimentality. He is harsh to his disciples also, and makes no concessions in the moral code. On the contrary, he demands heroic asceticism: but that is an ideal. In the welter of human sin and folly, seen from his infinite height, he is not squeamish about the depth of the degradation, if once a cry for deliverance arises from that depth.

The need of deliverance and the immediate personal possibility

of it are the twin roots of the whole gospel. The state of the world is so rotten that there is no hope of reforming it; it must be destroyed root and branch; but the individual soul may escape, by establishing a new life within itself and entering into a spiritual kingdom which is not of this world.

These presuppositions enable us to understand and surmount a difficulty in conceiving the union of divinity with humanity in the idea of Christ. The divinity must be veiled, secret, held in reserve, manifested only intermittently in a life that, unlike the life of God, passes from phase to phase and cannot hold its infinite riches all at once and without privation. This may be conceded without offence, since the spirit has become voluntarily incarnate, and in that character must endure successiveness and varying obscurity; nevertheless, it knows that its eternal vision endures undisturbed, and can be recovered at any moment, as a man recovers his common fund of knowledge and all his acquired arts whenever there is occasion, without practising or remembering them all uninterruptedly.

But how does it fare with humanity in such a union? Can all the feelings, passions, errors, and vices of man be enacted by a divine person? Will not the prior condition of being compatible with perfect holiness exclude almost all that is human from that incarnation? Evidently, if we understand by humanity the whole *comédie humaine*, the whole experience of mankind, as actually enacted, God can *know* all this, he can see it all in a picture or as a story; but he cannot *live* it all, even in a voluntary dream or assumed impersonation, because much of it, the errors for instance, contradict his eternal knowledge. So the crimes and the false hopes contradict his eternal will: they can enter his apprehension only as false and as criminal, never as true and glorious, which is what the deluded human soul feels them to be. It was therefore only a thoroughly transformed and expurgated humanity that could be assumed by the Word when it was made flesh.

This circumstance might seem to destroy half the force of the

assertion that Christ was a true man: for his humanity could be only extraordinarily limited and corrected. And so we find it described in the Gospels. Everything about him is miraculous, not merely that he works miracles, as many other prophets or healers were reputed to do, but that his birth and his gifts are miraculous, that he moves at will into an invisible sphere, that he inspires preternatural trust and reverence, and speaks oracular words. That nevertheless his humanity is obvious and profoundly real—more perfect, in fact, than that of other men—comes from the fact that mankind at large is not, according to the view of the Gospels, the criterion of humanity. Man, as he is, is a fallen creature, a distorted and self-contradictory being. It is not Christ that is not a complete man, but the common man that is half beast.

This sentiment, the consciousness of congenital sin, places the interpreter of the Gospels in a difficult position. Here, as in the Hebrew Bible and in all human views and judgments, there are philosophic presuppositions; but they are made instinctively and taken for granted, without being expressed in any theory or doctrine. The critic has to discover and express them in his own terms; and if he then imputes them to the firm but unreflective sentiment that he is studying, he runs great danger of misrepresenting it. The humanity of Christ, humanity such as may be assumed by a divine being without degradation or absurdity, presents a crucial instance of such a danger. An impatient philosopher, full of confidence in his own categories, might at once put this dilemma: Either *no* finite and particular existence is compatible with deity, being essentially unstable, dependent, deluded, and painful; or else *all* degrees and kinds of existence manifest deity and are compatible with it. If you say that the criminality in man is wretched and sinful, you should say the same of his intellect and morality, since these too are perfectly finite and specific, and are objects of inextinguishable laughter to the gods; while if on the contrary you set up your intellect and morality, in any phase of them, as cogent and appropriate for God also, you ought to admit the same divine

sanction for the whole frame of nature and for every form of life. Tell me then at once in which of these two radical senses I should take the idea of Christ. Is the Word made flesh in all flesh, and is it uttered by the whole existing and phenomenal universe? Or is that Word rather a divine inward summons to quit existence altogether, and to be reunited with the Eternal?

Such a dilemma is speculative and ultimate: it did not arise in the Hebraic tradition, except perhaps in stray minds that had lost their moorings and floated away in some alien current. Jehovah was conceived to be an agent within the natural world; he was not infinite, nor did he trouble himself with the question whether the world he moved in was infinite or not. And he neither expected nor allowed anything or anybody to be identified with himself. So his son, whom he had begotten and not made intentionally, had a specific divine nature and personality. It was for him to judge, when deputed to adopt a human soul and fuse it with his divine person, what type of humanity he would sanctify, and what types he would reject. All this happened freely, contingently, unpredictably, within space and time, by the agency of pre-existing causeless beings, exercising their particular powers under implied natural conditions that they neither notice nor fear. Here religion does not bring us the intuition of anything ideal. It reports a possible part of the internal economy of nature and life.

On this understanding we may proceed modestly to inquire what, according to the Gospels, is the type of human nature adopted by Christ. The answer will not be simple or abstractly expressible, because the Gospels are the work of various hands, representing various degrees of insight and different preconceptions. Yet we may gather the characteristics of this hallowed humanity together without difficulty; and we shall find them tolerably coherent.

As a preliminary we must banish the fanatical notion that matter is something evil or wholly negative or a mere impediment to the spirit. A divine person who assumes a human soul and body and

enacts an earthly life of his free accord (his will being intrinsically identical with that of his Father), cannot hate or despise matter. Like his Father, who found matter an indispensable medium for the creation, he does not come to destroy matter but to reanimate it: not to separate the souls of men from their bodies but to endow them, when redeemed, with those bodies renewed and rendered perfectly obedient to their souls.

Certainly the Gospels accept the primitive view of mankind that the spirits or shades of dead men subsist, at least for a time, as they reappear in dreams and in memory or may be called up by magical arts. So Christ, after his death, descends as a spirit only among the spirits waiting for him in Sheol, before he rejoins his body in the sepulchre and rises to a new and immortal life. But this temporary separation of soul from body, though possible and even general, is essentially abnormal. The soul is impotent without its instrument, like the harp player without his harp: he might remember or even compose his music, but he could neither hear it nor play it. The experience we all have of the resistance of the body to the soul, and of the vices of the body dragging the soul down with them, is an experience of disease. The spirit is willing but the flesh is torpid and avoids or perverts the movements that would call forth the spirit. According to the tradition followed by the Gospels, however, this obliquity of the flesh is due to previous evil choices made by the spirit, in Adam if not in ourselves. Christ comes to earth precisely to save us from the load of those evil choices; and then to restore us to the first state of nature, which was a state of grace and of perfect obedience of the body to the soul. This body would no longer either impede or misguide us; and so perfect would be this truly human life, that it would not know old age, but would last for ever and ever.

With these conceptions in the background we shall not be surprised to see Christ come eating and drinking, and his disciples not fasting, like the Pharisees or the disciples of the Baptist; the Bridegroom is still with them, in whom soul and body are in perfect

sympathy. When they have lost the Bridegroom, they will indeed fast.

Asceticism is thus a discipline necessary to the Christian life, but not its ultimate ideal. It is practised by Christ himself only in certain directions and at certain times, not through any superstitious fear of bodily life but only in defence of the truly natural life against the encroachments of a corrupt world and a diseased imagination. When I speak of a *truly natural* life, however, I am not thinking of what the naturalist would call natural. The average man, in the eyes of that man himself, when the spirit awakes in him, is a dull monster, a sort of Caliban, half beast and half devil. He is disgusting and foolish in his own eyes. Now in Christ we must expect the spirit to be awake, divinely awake, from the beginning, and a drastic revision of what human nature truly is must not surprise us in his person and in his doctrine.

This revision is not drastic, however, after the manner of pagan mystics, theosophists, or idealists. The body is to be accepted and preserved. Christ was willing to become an infant, a lisping child, a questioning boy, a young man working at a manual trade, and then driven by the spirit into the desert. He was tender towards the body, cured all its diseases, brought it to life again, fed it in multitudes by repeated miracles, and when he had taken the dead young girl by the hand and raised her from her sleep his first word was: *Give her something to eat*. He was the Word made flesh, and accepted the flesh for himself in all its humble accidents.

Yet to the flesh, in the sexual sense of the word, he was not tender. He would be born a helpless child, but must be born of a virgin. He readily forgave carnal sins but only with the command that they should not be repeated. In the Kingdom of Heaven there would be no marriage or giving in marriage. The family was something to be retained socially but to be transcended religiously: those with whom one is in spiritual communion are one's true family. So too he accepted the larger institutions of society and the state; they were doubtless inevitable and not worth rebelling

against, and it was simpler to return their coin to those who had minted it; but a man's real duty was to his private neighbours, in their homely joys and necessities. Learning, too, was rather a snare than an inspiration; it embroiled you in the letter and killed the spirit. It was vain also to resist violence by violence, and so to perpetuate violence and injustice. *All they that take the sword shall perish with the sword.*

Thus the whole machinery of life, by which the world is kept going—reproduction, labour, war, government, and the arts—is condemned or dismissed with aversion: yet the life of the body, in time and in the bosom of nature, is loved, purified, and preserved. Paradise is to be restored, yet hardly in a garden: rather in a celestial temple, before the Throne of God, in a sanctuary full of tenderness, worship, wisdom, and prayer.

We may see in this ideal an echo of the later Jewish religion, that had become ecclesiastical and consecrated, making up in devout intensity for the surrender of political freedom and hope. Yet there is a deeper root, I think, for this sort of ascetic naturalism. Christ is not at all ecclesiastical or conventional: he is a prophet in the wilderness, among the rudest people, followed by disciples picked up in the highways and byways. He preaches by preference in the open air, in fishing villages, with new and fearless grace. And when he preaches in the synagogues or the Temple it is rather to defy and upbraid the ruling theocracy than to join in their cults. For he was secretly—the Evangelists never forget it—the Son of God, come down from heaven in order to lead back there those who might believe in him. It was in view of immortality that he loved and redeemed mortal life.

Now immortality for the individual man, with an animal body and an animal psyche, is something non-natural. Life is spontaneously perpetual, it propagates itself, but only through a cycle of birth and death for each generation; and the individual soul, though brave and intent in youth on preserving itself, is unwittingly and irresistibly directed on propagating life to others.

Later that passion, when it has surrounded us with wives and children, yields to the passion for ruling the family and the state, and directing for future ages the course of human society. So the Hebrew patriarchs conceived the matter, being extremely concerned to have a numerous progeny, length of days, and a glorious tribal history, but never dreaming of a personal immortality for their bodies, much less for their disembodied souls, which would be only miserable ghosts. Adam himself was provided by the Creator with a wife, and would not have been a man at all had he not possessed the organs and the will that would prompt him to propagate his kind. Paradise would have soon been overcrowded with his descendents: but it was lost in time to prevent that inconvenience, and men began to kill and to drive out one another, like all the lower animals. This, to the lusty and unregenerate patriarchs, seemed no anomaly, rather an incentive to self-assertion; but a different sentiment soon began to insinuate itself into the human conscience. To be natural came to seem dangerous: it brought down the Deluge; it continually brought down disaster even on the "chosen people," whom God had sworn to protect.

We see, then, how the willingness of the Son of God to become man, while it involved assuming a body, did not involve any contamination with sexual, military, or political life; and why he assimilated the ideal of human existence to that of the lilies of the field and the birds of the air. The *natural* state of man was neither that he should be a rational animal nor that he should be a spark of pure spirit flying back from earthly separation and existence into the focus of eternal life. The *natural* state was to be an immortal body animated by an immortal soul; and the *natural habitat* of such a creature would not be the earth as it now exists, in process of evolution, amid spasms of improvident growth and fatal catastrophes, but his proper habitat was the Kingdom of Heaven: a material kingdom, in which we might live with our individual bodies and memories, but perpetually safe, free from labour and care, and employed only in the endless happy under-

standing of eternal things. Eternal things, however, include all possibilities: they therefore include the *ideas* of temporal things, as they exist in the mind of God. It might well be the special vocation of the human creature to be chiefly concerned with images of time, and of dramas in time: but it should have been with the detachment of a transcendental spirit, partaking in the peace of Christ.

The Son of Man was therefore as far as possible from being the embodiment or even the ideal of common or actual human nature. It was no part of the extant creation, much less the whole of it, that Christ assumed when he became man. He did not inherit the sin of Adam. Even his mother, according to the Church, had been free from it. He assumed only a lost, an ideal, a non-natural humanity, such as myth pictured in Adam, or rather such as the saints hoped to possess in heaven. Only after the actual world and the actual man have been finally judged and abolished at the last day, could mankind become, in a new and changeless form, the chosen partners and dwelling place of the deity.



THE MIRACLES

Many people would like to eliminate the miracles from the Gospels. Nothing is easier than to disbelieve them: they may be illusions founded on ignorance of the secret workings of nature, or inventions bred spontaneously, like dreams, in the very act of remembering or repeating any exciting story. But it would be only a new illusion, and a fresh passionate invention on our part, if we imagined that by eliminating the miracles we could come upon the historical truth concerning the life of Jesus or upon the genuine moral message of the Gospels. The first condition for reaching such understanding is to overcome the modern assumption that miracles are impossible. This assumption is convenient and prudent in daily life; we may go our rounds happily without stopping to challenge it. Yet historical evidence, impartially collected, is far from supporting it, and logically it is untenable. Logically *everything is possible*; and if a certain sequence of events happens not to be found in our experience, nothing proves that it may not occur beyond. If, abandoning the narrow ground of experience, the rationalist appeals to reason, and says that miracles are impossible because they would be unintelligible, he falls into a verbal trap, baited to snare the innocent. Existence is necessarily unintelligible. Just as logically anything may happen, so the fact that something in particular happens is essentially irrational. It may be a part of a sequence often repeated; but the fact that such a sequence ever

occurs or occurs often remains an utterly arbitrary and inexplicable fact. Therefore when the rationalist says that something is impossible he is merely confessing that such a thing has not come within the circle of his thoughts and that he has not wit enough to imagine it.

Miracles are so called because they excite wonder. In unphilosophical minds any rare or unexpected thing excites wonder, while in philosophical minds the familiar excites wonder also, and the laws of nature, if we admit such laws, excite more wonder than the detached events. Each morning the sunrise excites wonder in the poet, and the order of the solar system excites it every night in the astronomer. Astronomy explains the sunrise, but what shall explain the solar system? The universe, which would explain everything, is the greatest of wonders, and a perpetual miracle.

Things, then, are not wonderful merely for being unusual. In the Gospels visits of angels and sudden cures of diseases or of possession by devils form the regular mechanism by which the Kingdom of Heaven announces its presence. These miracles are expected by the crowd, and when they happen, the reason for them is well understood. That is why they are proofs of divine authority, and not mere inexplicable facts. The essence of a miracle is that, in breaking through the superficial routine of events, it manifests the real power that brings them about, and proves that this power is profoundly human. It is the power of *The Good* or divine love of our good. It is the power of God, which nature cannot control, but which faith and prayer may prevail upon to succour us.

Miracles may therefore transform the object of religion from an object of prudent attention into an object of love. So long as God personifies only the power of nature, the wise man will fear him, respect him, learn his ways, and thriftily profit by them in all the arts. But when God personifies *The Good*, the heart loves him already without having named him, and the new revelation comes only in the miracle that *The Good* should prove to be also the power that ultimately governs everything.

Such is the atavistic message, the glad tidings, brought by Christ.

The Gospels are a tissue of miracles, and so are the inner lives of the saints. We perfectly understand *why* they occur, something never to be understood regarding ordinary events. They happen for our sake, to help and to save us: and that is the wonder. To eliminate them from Christ's life would be to take the soul out of it, for they are not mere incidents there. They are parts of one great visitation, the coming of God to earth, the Kingdom of Heaven realised: one overwhelming miracle by which the whole world is to be swallowed up, judged, condemned and supplanted.

The miracles in the Gospels are set forth as signs of Christ's power: they, not any superiority in his life or doctrine, are the proofs that he himself offers of his divine commission. Now, merely rare and inexplicable events would not be signs of power, but rather of disorder in nature. Far from prompting us to be converted and to submit our heart and mind to an absolute authority, they would encourage wild action, irresponsible hopes and a generally romantic and daredevil spirit. If the miracles in the Gospels are signs of power, it is because they happen at Christ's bidding, or in conformity to his evident intention.

There is, indeed, a certain involuntary power or influence in his person, as when he feels virtue going out of him, and turns his head, to see who has touched the hem of his garment. Such magic virtue, like the healing power of the air in certain places, or of certain herbs and waters, belongs to the sympathetic texture of nature, and is surprising only when we come upon it unexpectedly or in an exceptional case. It is not properly miraculous; but in Jesus it serves to reveal the same personal prerogative that appears in his irresistible commands, when he comes upon some stranger, looks at him for a moment, bids him follow, and the man follows. The suggestion is not so powerful when it does not come unsought, in the imperative mood, but only as a last possibility: *If thou wouldst be perfect, sell all thou hast, and follow me.* The personal impact, the physical magic, fails here, and we are not surprised that the rich young man sorrowfully turns away.

On the other hand, we do not reckon it a miracle that, within cer-

tain limits, our bodies should obey our will, or that our servants should obey it, also within limits; yet this, in the terms in which philosophers usually state the problem, is perfectly unintelligible. The sympathetic texture of nature conjoins these phenomena in a way we have not traced; and custom leads us to expect the conjunction in the sphere where it is familiar, while in any other sphere it seems miraculous or impossible. So the tricks of the prestidigitator continue to seem impossible, although we see them and know that they must be tricks, until the mechanism of them is revealed to us: and so many of the therapeutic miracles in the Gospels belong to an occult art, which has its laws and may be taught to apprentices. Christ sends forth his disciples, giving them power to cast out devils and cure certain diseases; and if they ask why, in some cases, they were not able to do so, he gives one or two explanations: either that they lacked faith, or that, for instance, this kind of devil cannot be cast out save by prayer and fasting. These conditions may seem spiritual, but they all have a physical side; and we are evidently in the borderland between natural magic and individual acts of divine omnipotence. It is to this direct and specific exercise of omnipotence that prayer appeals when it brings about a miracle. Still, the efficacy of prayer has itself regular conditions and degrees. Faith seems to be the chief of these. What is this faith, and why does it merit such extraordinary favours?

We must exclude the suspicion, inevitable to a modern mind, that faith is requisite in the public in order to produce the *illusion* of miracles, and to *credit* them when they are reported. The ancients had no prejudice against miracles, nor has the natural man. Shakespeare, without the least weakness for traditional piety, admits all reported omens, prophecies, ghosts, and magic powers as perfectly credible and dramatically verified. So Herodotus, and other ancient historians, without perhaps expressing their own judgment, repeat the recorded wonders for our edification: why shouldn't the gods, if they choose, govern the world in those amiable and fanciful ways? There was therefore no motive for regarding faith as a

source of illusion. It might be such in certain cases; but in other cases faith might be the source of opportune courage, of instinctively fit action, and of brilliant success. Peter flounders in the water when his confidence gives out: that is a normal biological effect, and would have occurred if he had been walking on a tight-rope instead of on the sea. But no degree of faith could have made him walk on the sea naturally: the confidence he lost was not confidence in an acquired art, as it might have been in an acrobat, but confidence in the omnipotence of Christ. Christ, or the will of the Father to which Christ was conforming, had decreed a miracle, but on condition that Peter's faith in Christ should not waver. This faith had no physiological connection with the act of walking on the waves: it was related to that act, and to failure in it, only through the special providence of God, which had made faith a condition for granting that miraculous power. All the miracles in the Gospels come to reward and confirm faith in Christ. They are the proof that the Kingdom of Heaven has come, that it exists in our midst; they manifest the principles that govern that kingdom, and they prepare us to live under them.

Nevertheless, often, if not always, there subsists a ceremonious element, an element of natural magic, in the way Christ works his miracles. Sometimes he works them from a distance, without uttering any audible word; yet even then he has turned towards the place where the miracle is to occur, his mind is intent upon that scene, or he looks up to heaven for a moment, as if to see the appointed event, and assure himself again that it is according to God's will. Sometimes he takes elaborate means, makes clay with spittle, applies it medicinally on the blind eyes, and sends the man to wash them in a particular pool. Often he touches those he would heal, although at other times the word spoken suffices to cure the body and to forgive the sin. Yet even this forgiveness is always sacramental: the word must be spoken, or at least the express consent to forgive must be given by the divine mind. It is all an act of government, an operation of grace. Nature and law do not decide

the matter automatically, so that Christ with a wise mind may observe them and instruct us about them afterwards; but a personal government, committed to him in his human person, pronounces on every event, and pronounces with a certain freedom and prerogative proper to absolute monarchs, with generosity, with severity, sometimes with a certain fanciful initiative. A man among men is judging, and the eternal laws are not jealous. As if confessing how arbitrary they are in themselves, they bend without protest to the rhythms and affections of a human soul.

The Evangelists recount all these miracles for the sake of proving that Jesus was the Christ and the Son of God; yet that was far from being the motive that prompted Christ to perform them. On the contrary, the Gospels represent him as refusing to "give a sign" of his Messiahship, whenever challenged to do so. It was the devil that tempted him to throw himself from the pinnacle of the Temple, to prove that the angels would bear him up, lest he should dash his foot against a stone. He will give no sign but the sign of Jonah; he will submit to be swallowed up by the world's hatred and neglect; it is not in the world that he wishes to triumph, but over the world. When alone, unobserved, he may allow his omnipotence to show itself, as it were automatically, as when in the night he walks upon the sea; but in public, if a miracle is imposed upon him, it is almost always by the power of his secret pity and kindness, which he cannot bear to resist. Yet the effort wearies him; perhaps also the sense of futility in doing these small mercies, snatching one brand from the universal conflagration, restoring one child to life, when a thousand children are dying, and none in the end can escape death. He heals those that approach him, he feeds the multitude that follow him into the desert; he speaks to them in parables, that they may at least understand his words, though incapable of understanding his secret; and as soon as possible he escapes, far from all these solicitations and sad cries of gratitude and confused false hopes. He minimises his miracles. *Thy faith*, he says, *hath made thee whole*: the dead child, or Lazarus after five

days in the grave, is not dead, but sleepeth. Often he charges those he has healed to tell no man of it. After all, miracles and the report of miracles were not attached to him alone; magicians and miracle-workers were common; it was more an indignity than an honour or a good omen to be numbered among them. But to this too he was bound to submit for the time being. The happy day, the one glorious miracle was that sign of Jonah which he had promised should come soon, when he himself should rise again from the dead, or rather, as he perhaps might have felt, when he should rise again from the living.

As a foretaste of this consummation, there are some miracles reported in the Gospels that are not works of mercy dictated by compassion for human ills, but rather breaks in those clouds, glimpses of the other world and its mysteries. These revelations are few and granted, like the Transfiguration, only to chosen disciples, and even they seem to be hardly prepared to understand them. It is notable how humble, how physical Christ's benefactions are compelled to be. Even when, besides healing some disease or relieving some pressing distress, he adds: *Thy sins are forgiven thee*, this seems to be a retrospective mercy. The prospect, even if it were possible to sin no more, remains dark and empty: there is no initiation into higher things, to fill the void left by renouncing the world, the flesh, and the devil; and if anyone, like the well-meaning Nicodemus, comes with some intellectual difficulty, he is left only the more perplexed by the mysterious words that he hears.

Yet the mysteries and the glories of a higher sphere exist, they surround us invisibly at all hours, and we are allowed to see how conscious Christ himself is of their presence, how often he must go alone into the wilderness to renew his communion with them, and how gladly he would show them to us if we had only eyes to see them. Besides the choirs of angels at the Nativity, and the dove and the voice from heaven at the Baptism, and the Resurrection (which no one witnessed) and the Transfiguration, which was a foretaste of it, the institution of the Eucharist is perhaps the most

remarkable of the miracles of grace. It is evidently not comprehended by the twelve at the Last Supper, nor perhaps by the Evangelists who report it, for it is omitted altogether in *John*. But in the sixth chapter of *John* there is a mystical discourse about eating Christ's flesh and drinking his blood that may serve to open our minds a little to the meaning of this mystery. It is a mystery, a sacrament; and the evident allegory in it does not reduce it to a ceremony about nothing. On the one hand, we are not asked to revert in spirit to the lusts of the cannibal and the vampire: decent bread and wine are substituted in the material act of Communion. But even the grossest material sacrifices and feasts were never merely material: there was always a sense that the soul of the beast sacrificed and the spirit of the god invoked entered into the worshipper in that sacrificial banquet. The stream of universal life was allowed to flow through him more freely; he was linked anew and more closely to all the sources of his life and to all the future of creation. Now this quickening was miraculous: not the usual effect of so much food and drink, but a sympathetic enthusiasm awaked by the concurrence of sacred associations and ritual acts, and by the contagious faith of centuries and nations.

So much for the ecclesiastical decorum and devout atmosphere of this Christian mystery. On the other hand, there is in reserve, for those who are capable of feeling such things, a most literal spiritual influx of consolation and energy, called grace, and a real assimilation of the human will and intellect to the divine. We are invited actually to partake of the life and death and resurrection of Christ: something perfectly possible, if we understand the terms conceptually and not historically. The *idea* of Christ is that of God in man: this *idea* may be exemplified in some degree in anybody, as we find it so perfectly exemplified in Christ: and the Eucharist is a sacrament by which through a material instrumentality always indispensable for spiritual contacts, we may absorb something more of that spirit and that form. Our predisposition, sensitiveness, and faith are prior conditions for this influx to occur freely: but here the

Christian has a channel provided for him through which grace and assimilation to God may flow, if he is called to receive them.

The Evangelists could not foresee what a function the Eucharist, as a presence apart from material communion, was destined to assume in the Church in these latter days; but Christ must be conceived to have foreseen it; and we must admire the perfect harmony of this perpetual silent reincarnation of his divinity with the original incarnation of it in the womb of a virgin. The tabernacle becomes another manger, the monstrance another cross; and in the solitude of some mountain monastery and amid the promiscuous crowds of a city, Christ, who was once willing to live on earth, still lives silent and unrecognised among his fellow creatures, not scandalised at their luxury or their sins, patient of their unbelief, responsive to the sparks of grace or of spirit that may flit spasmodically among the cold ashes in their souls.

Amid so many miraculous manifestations of divine charity and a few manifestations of divine splendour, there is one little miracle that has always puzzled the commentators, because it seems a manifestation of divine impatience. True, divine impatience is often expressed in threats and warnings by all the prophets, and by Christ himself; and the commentators think they see the justice of divine retribution for sin, because sin is, or was in the beginning, an inexcusable misuse of free will. But why should God be impatient and punish a fig tree for not bearing figs? And why didn't the Evangelists, or the copyists, drop this puzzling and unedifying anecdote out of the narrative, as being probably apocryphal? Apocryphal or not, for my part I am glad that they piously retained it, for it seems to me a perfect miniature of the idea of Christ. It exhibits his humanity frankly and naively: he is parched and tired walking in the heat of the day, and the sight of a green fig tree by the dusty road suggests refreshment. Christ has a human psyche: ideas and impulses arise in him spontaneously; and he goes up to the fig tree, imagining the figs. He knows of course that it is not the season, but the impulse acts of itself, and keeps that knowledge, for the

moment, in abeyance. Finding no figs, but leaves only, he suffers the inevitable revulsion of a balked instinct: and then, with this revulsion, the divine prerogative in him comes to the fore. He curses that innocent fig tree, and the next day it is found withered.

Now cursing is a most human thing, a kind of malignant prayer: and it is just what, upon a trivial vexation like this, any profane fool might indulge in, to vent his spleen. But such a profane curse would not be efficacious, nor expected to be so: in fact it would rather be a confession of impotence and of having played the fool. Traditional language, however, attributes wrath and curses to God, and Christ himself speaks of the curse he will pronounce upon the wicked on the Day of Judgment. But that curse will not be a malignant prayer; it will be a sentence, an act of omnipotence. Discounting the metaphor, in calling such an event a curse, we may say that there is neither vexation nor spleen nor malignity about it, but rather order re-established and the nature of things working itself out.

If when Christ curses the fig tree his curse is efficacious, we see that his divinity has suddenly come to the fore, and that he has passed from the disappointed thirst of his body to the zeal of his heart for the Kingdom of God. He also thirsted materially on the cross; and the commentators have not been slow to detect allegory in both cases. The fig tree is Israel, refusing to believe in him, and all unbelieving souls. Very well: but that is not what concerns me now in this miracle.

The fig tree was innocent. It had put forth an abundance of green leaves, according to its nature; and it was not its fault that the Son of God had passed and had looked for its fruits when they were not ready. But Christ that thirsted for those fruits was also innocent, and more than innocent. He was not walking by for his pleasure, but in profound sadness, to enlighten and save a world that would not be saved or enlightened. On that mission at this moment his human yet divine body called for relief, and the world refused him that relief. This disharmony needed to be righted. He

might have righted it by a miracle of grace, and caused that fig tree suddenly to hasten its growth, and load itself with ripe figs out of season. But that was not the will of his Father, whom it was his will to obey. He must endure this day's thirst; for, as he had said, it must needs be that offence come, but woe to him by whom the offence cometh. Innocence is no safeguard against fate. If instead of the Son of God it had been a thundercloud that had passed, and by chance the lightning had fallen on that fig tree and blasted it, the fig tree would have been equally innocent, and equally unfortunate. Nothing has a right to exist: it draws that privilege from the place it may momentarily fill in the order of nature or, in pious diction, for the glory of God. The glory of God now required that that fig tree should wither, for not having known the day of its visitation. It had no sense for the fact that God had become man and had required its fruits at once; and it had no power to meet that tremendous change in its circumstances. It could do nothing but die. It is not on voluntary naughtiness, not on conscious sins, that divine punishment falls most heavily and irremediably. For such sins there is possible repentance, and they are, after all, groping after a good, however ill-chosen. The final curse falls rather on constitutional blindness, on self-sufficiency, on obduracy in not recognising divine opportunities. It will be easier in the day of judgment for Sodom and Gomorrha than for those who will not dutifully receive Christ or even his apostles. The curse that falls on that tree is the shadow of his unsuspected divinity. He is being every inch a God, yet in honour of the humblest and most pathetic needs of his human nature.

I know that such monarchical and absolute notions of divine government are not agreeable to modern feeling, but they are the principles proclaimed in the Gospels. We prefer to conceive divine justice after our own sentiments rather than after the actual procedure of nature. In ignoring divine prerogatives we are like the barren fig tree. Is it our fault that this is not a season for faith? Are we not doing our best, putting forth an abundance of green

leaves? Do we pretend to more? Do we intentionally entice anybody to come and look for ripe fruit on our branches? Do we not wish everybody well? How then can we be cursed for not embracing unnecessary opinions that contradict all our habits of thought and judgment? Certainly we are not *to blame*, and nature will not condemn us for any such priggish reason. It will be, if it so happens, because our further existence would not be for the glory of God. We are as innocent as the fig tree. Nevertheless it is quite possible that on the morrow we may be found withered.



THE PARABLES

The Parables are the illustrations to the Gospels: images that sometimes arise spontaneously in expressing a thought, like any poetic metaphor, and sometimes may be independent pictures sketched from nature, or little dramas conceived for their own sake; perhaps, indeed, the original source of the maxims that they now serve to enforce. So when we read, *Consider the lilies of the field, how they toil not neither do they spin; and yet I say unto you that even Solomon in all his glory was not arrayed like one of these*, we have set before us a short fable, contrasting the untroubled life in nature with the hectic life of the human world. The precept, *Take no thought for what ye shall eat or wherewith ye shall be clothed*, may well be only an inspiration drawn from observing the flowers: that which a fabulist would have made the flowers reply to some busybody who stopped to scold them for their idleness. It is profoundly true that even in our own bodies and minds life is not founded on labour, nor are any of its best manifestations founded upon it; yet it does not follow that in human society we can dismiss all labour and care. We can at best avoid being submerged in them, reduced to instruments, and cut off altogether from nature and from God. The precept sets forth a divine ideal, not ordinarily attainable by any animal; and the picture serves to persuade us that in this respect the animal is less perfect than the vegetable.

This reference to non-human life is exceptional in the Gospels: the parables do not imitate folklore and fables in making the animals speak, in order to show us human nature in a simplified and true perspective. Only human personages and human arts are employed, but these preserve their simple types and generic motives. Only seldom, as in the parable of the Prodigal Son, does the fable become a drama with living characters and emotions. There is Biblical dignity and directness in the language and the well-known patriarchal Palestinian background. The realism of the poor appears in all its pathos. Intensity seems to increase with limitation, and strength with singleness of purpose. The more elementary the passions invoked, the better we perceive their intrinsic character and destiny.

The general theme of the parables is the Kingdom of Heaven and its economy. But what is this Kingdom of Heaven or, as more properly rendered, this reign of God? The meaning is far from clear. It seems to pass from the actual government of God in nature and history, through prophecies of a better and more direct moral order to be established in the world at large, or perhaps only in a Church Militant subsisting painfully within that world; until at last we reach the notion of a transfigured life among the angels in heaven. Sometimes simultaneously, Messianic hopes seem to be suspended, and salvation and bliss appear to be a purely mystical state of the soul, to be attained anywhere by anybody at any time. But we should misrepresent the mind of the Evangelists and their idea of the mission of Christ, if we *substituted* this spiritual transformation for the prophecy of the end of this world and the material establishment of another. Personal conversion is indeed essential; but it figures only as the means legally appointed for obtaining admission into that new kingdom, or as a foretaste of the kind of happiness that we should enjoy there. Both as a means and as a foretaste, a change of heart had already been celebrated by the prophets and in the *Psalms*, without in the least abandoning the national hope of a glorious restoration. The gospel of Saint John

the Baptist and of Christ retains these two prospects, the political and the spiritual, the temporal and the eternal. It merely refines the temper of the coming world, without abolishing its material and future reality.

Proverbs, similes, and parables are forms of popular wisdom and wit: they rise spontaneously to the lips of anyone who is intent on awakening the public conscience and making it feel how intolerable the present state of things is and how inevitable is a drastic revolution. Yet it can be only from old, familiar, self-repeating experience that those shrewd pictures can be drawn, so that in the happy use of such figures of speech there are two requisites to be combined: truth to nature in the image, and inevitableness in the moral that it suggests. So in the appeal to the lilies of the field, no one can fail to feel how trustfully they come to perfection; and how, in contrast to ourselves, they live without care. Here at once one desideratum appears, one blessing to be hoped for in the reign of God: that under it we should be free from care.

Yet those perfect lilies, though they are not anxious, are not safe; if we come to admire them again tomorrow we may find them trampled upon or withered. In the Kingdom of Heaven we need to be not merely beautiful and placid, but secure: and this requirement will be made graphically clear to us by other similes. We are told not to lay up our treasure where moth and rust can corrupt, or where thieves may break in and steal. A wise man will build his house upon a rock. But is not then this wise man taking thought for the morrow? And will his forethought render his house so safe that it will protect him and his treasure forever? Surely not, according to the analogy of nature: and in the Kingdom of Heaven this must be changed too. It should be in the *essence* of our new treasure and our new mansion to be incorruptible. God is a spirit, and they that worship him should worship him in spirit and in truth. We cannot serve two masters; we cannot cleave to our temporal life and to our eternal life equally, but should seek the one thing needful only, and let the rest be added to us, if God will. The similes

thus lead us step by step in our meditation, until we come to ultimate issues.

The most common proverbs, such as *A stitch in time saves nine*, usually carry a precept with them, because they arise in the midst of action, when saving time and saving labour are welcome means of attaining a given end: and only much later, in scientific leisure, does it occur to anyone that the proverb intrinsically contains no advice, but merely describes the ways of nature, and that Penelope, whose object was not to finish, might have dropped a stitch on purpose, so as to have nine more to sew. In the same way many of the parables in the Gospels would suggest a different moral to a mind not preoccupied with salvation, and not believing in a monarchical God. That moth and rust corrupt treasures laid up in chests would not suggest to him to lay up other entirely different treasures in heaven; rather not to lay up treasures at all, but to use and display them at once, while they are fresh and while his interest in them is fresh also. All shrewd observation of the economy of nature is therefore normally neutral, unless the observer is already morally biased: and the genuine charm of the Gospel parables lies in the graphic miniatures they contain of homely facts and noble manners. Truth to nature is a great virtue in mind, because mind is too apt to run away into dreamland, before the real conditions of life are understood; and nature, moreover, has a great authority over life, in that it fixes these conditions.

This neutral authority of nature is so great that sometimes its ways are identified with the ways of God. Such an identification was legitimate in the old dispensation, because the Israelites were thinking of this world only and of prosperity in it. The fear of the Lord was the beginning of wisdom, and the study of his ways, observable in nature and history, was wisdom itself. The case is no longer the same in the New Testament, which inverts natural values and promises another life; yet even here we find sometimes the authority of nature asserting itself, and accepted as describing the ultimate will of God. For instance, that *unto every one that*

bath shall be given . . . but from him that hath not shall be taken away even that which he hath, is a maxim enforced by several parables. Men are initially unequal, and this inequality normally increases, since greater gifts secure greater results, and these make possible still greater undertakings. This is true also of intelligence and virtue; only those who have begun well and taken the first step rightly can hope to reach the true summit. Yet this seems hardly consonant with moral justice; nor does it breathe that mystical spirit of sudden grace and supermoral equality which blows so strongly in the direct relations of Christ with individuals. The Magdalene and the good thief are saved outright, because they cry *peccavi*, and in their hearts love and believe, even if only at the eleventh hour. This seems to contradict the principle that to him that hath shall be given. Perhaps the fundamental fact is that nobody ever has anything but what is given to him gratuitously, either by an original natural endowment, to be developed by use, or else suddenly by a new grace, disclosing or infusing a deeper impulse, at first not evident. The gifts of grace, like those of nature, require active acceptance and exercise; but such acceptance and quick response are a part of those gifts: the flighty convert has not been fully converted; the lazy artist has never been truly inspired.

A curious sidelight is thrown on this subject by the parable of the unjust but clever steward who made himself friends of the mammon of unrighteousness, and he is commended explicitly because the children of this world are wiser in their generation than the children of light. This world, as we are allowed to see, is held together by a conspiracy of vested interests, not to say of cooperative vices; but it is a cruel cooperation. The servant coming home from the fields is not told to go and sit down to meat. His master will rather say to him: *Make ready wherewith I may sup, and gird thyself, and serve me, till I have eaten and drunken, and afterward thou shalt eat and drink. Doth he thank that servant because he did the things that were commanded him? I trow not.* Nor is the rich man in a better case who lies dreaming of the vast barns he is about

to build, and says to his soul: *Soul, thou hast much goods laid up for many years: take thine ease, eat, drink, and be merry.* But God will say to him: *Thou fool, this night thy soul shall be required of thee.*

It would seem, then, from these examples, that friendship with the mammon of unrighteousness is hardly true friendship, and that the wisdom of this world is deceptive, since it gives you the means to ends not worth attaining. All the parables, therefore, that illustrate the ways of nature, or the moral economy of society, encourage us to turn away from this world: not frivolously or in despair, but in the earnest hope of finding a better world. And in fact most of the parables prefigure the Kingdom of Heaven, and show us the way to reach it, if we have ears to hear and courage to follow. Though worldly wisdom will be well enough in its place, here worldly wisdom is not exhibited for its own sake, as in ordinary proverbs and fables. It is set forth only as a hint or a similitude, to suggest figuratively another order, revealed to us now only in religion, but in fact deeper, more primitive. In miracles, in conversion, in prophecy this higher order breaks in upon the lower, and proves that it is superior in power as well as in quality. Such manifestations and the faith they inspire compose the history of religion in the world and in the heart: and of this history the parables give us many illustrations.

A householder plants a vineyard, or a king leaves his throne to go into a far country, and commits the care of his estate to his servants. By this we may understand that this world and we in it have no independent existence. We are offshoots of a different world, monarchically and morally governed, as this world is not, if considered in itself. We are but branches of a vine the roots and stem of which are invisible. We are born servants, charged with duties not of our own choosing.

Moreover, our gifts and responsibilities are not equal. The Master has assigned to one of us one talent and to another ten talents. Fearing that we may become lazy or riotous, he sends an

agent occasionally to inspect us and to collect his rents. We disregard, maltreat and destroy these agents, and when finally he sends his son, we do the same to him. This is evidently a summary of the history of the prophets and of Christ's history. And the prophecy of Christ's second coming and of the Last Judgment naturally follows.

His first advent, however, has another aspect. He is sent not so much to judge as to offer a new life, in which those who were servants shall become friends. He comes to earth for his wedding feast. All Israel is bidden; but they make excuses; and the doors will be thrown open to the Gentiles and to all the outcasts in the world. That existence after death, so dismal a prospect to the ancients, should now be represented as an unexpected banquet offered to a crowd of wretches, marks a great change in human sentiment. Men now will turn to God, not for help in their earthly affairs, but for escape from them and from hopeless misery: and only those who feel this hopeless misery, and have no prosperous affairs in hand, will answer God's summons. The rich, the learned, the self-satisfied cannot enter the Kingdom of Heaven. Verily they already have their reward.

Here we touch that reversal of human values for which Christianity was so much despised in the days of the renaissance and in our day, since Nietzsche, by the new pagans. These parables will help to show us how partial the reversal really was; how far the ideals that it rejected were inhuman or unnecessary; and how far the ideals that it substituted remained human and inevitable.

The Prodigal Son and the Good Samaritan appeal to primary human emotions. The Pharisee that passes on the other side is evidently hedging away from an impulse to stop and if possible to help. As a punctual man of affairs he is resisting the temptation to loiter, to meddle, to be distracted by cares that do not concern him. He is afraid of being too human. The Samaritan is really more a man of the world. He postpones his trivial engagements, stops to do a kindness to a stranger, gives directions to the landlord to look after him, and a good fee, and trots away not much later

with a lighter heart. Here is a lesson in humanity, in *savoir vivre*, and in rational happiness.

In the *Prodigal Son* the perfectly normal human motives of all the characters are exhibited even more fully. The moral itself is rather a psychological truth than an ideal of justice. There is more joy in finding what was lost than there would have been in merely keeping it: yet we are not expected to draw the conclusion that it is *better* to sin, in order to give the angels the joy of seeing us repent. The lesson is only one of charity towards sinners, who may have potentially richer natures than ourselves. The good son who plods his monotonous way at home need not be jealous, if he is humble and can at once understand and renounce the adventures of his passionate brother. Christianity has come into a world full of suffering and vice. It neither abets that suffering and vice, as if they were prior conditions for the existence of Christian virtue, nor merely ignores and eludes them, as pagan virtue attempted to do. Christianity recognises them as data: the question is how to confront them, and how to draw individual souls out of them as far as possible. Christ did not become man in order to enjoy the world nor in order to destroy it nor even in order to reform it, in the sense of turning it into a perfectly healthy pagan world. He became man in order to save it: that is to say, to rescue the souls in it from the inevitable shipwreck. The keynote is that of redemption. The world is on the point of destruction, yet salvation is possible. The zeal to save, the joy in being saved, will therefore be the ruling Christian emotions.

This work of saving souls will be long and never wholly successful. The parables of the wheat and the tares and of the net full of all sorts of fish, to be sifted later, warn us of this fact and represent the prudent opportunist catholic attitude of the future Church to the world. Nature is normally neutral; the sun shines and the rain falls equally on the just and on the unjust. Tares will therefore always spring up with the same readiness as wheat, and the husbandman must be patient and content with an imperfect harvest.

Yet this mildness and tolerance are temporary only and a matter of policy, because evil is too deeply rooted to be eradicated, and premature violence only compromises the forces that make for virtue and renders them vain and cruel. Better wait for the harvest. A strong wind then will blow the chaff away and leave the grain clear, even if moderate in quantity.

This tolerant spirit is not in the least due to any naturalistic sympathy with random growths: the criterion of excellence remains fixed, particular, and monarchical. Together with those parables counselling patience we find others breathing the most absolute assurance and exclusiveness. The pearl of great price renders all else worthless in the eyes of the happy finder. It is not a question of relative estimation, but of a new, unexampled, passionate love. The man who has spied a treasure hid in a field sells all he has, and buys that field. Even in the parable of the wedding feast, when the doors have been thrown open to the rabble, there is austerity in reserve. The master of the house inspects the company, and casts out the man without a wedding garment. Why this sudden requirement? How should a poor beggar have a wedding garment? We must not put such questions. The Lord is absolute lord: he makes what laws he will. So much the worse for you if you fail to conform. Perhaps that requisite wedding garment was not an earthly possession. Perhaps it was complete denudation; and perhaps that wretched beggar had come to the banquet hiding a few bits of stale bread in his rags. Had he come without possessions, with no trust in himself, perhaps a miraculous wedding garment would have covered his nudity. At any rate we read elsewhere that *Whosoever he be of you who forsaketh not all that he hath, he cannot be my disciple.*

In spite, then, of all temporary accommodations, the Kingdom of Heaven is something of incomparable, urgent, overpowering worth. Faith in it fixes a great gulf between the saved and the damned. *If any man hate not his father and mother and wife and children and brethren and sisters, yea, and his own life also, he can have*

no part in it. This hardness is conspicuous in the sentiment of Christ towards his family, his race, his ancestral religion, his generation, and mankind in general. He is utterly indifferent to all mundane interests, full of bitter invectives, and continually ends his discourses with the grim prophecy: *There shall be weeping and gnashing of teeth*. How is this possible when it was God's love for the world that sent his son into it, and when love for one another was his chief precept? If he came to heal, to forgive, and to bring peace, why did he exact such an unnatural, hectic, revolutionary faith, and a zeal that soon degenerates into fanaticism: things that he knew would create division and war, most unnecessarily, in every society and in every soul?

Justice, reason, and truth cannot have the same grounds in God that they have in us. In us they are secondary harmonies, established between us and preëxisting persons and things. They are docile unprejudiced ways of adjusting our thoughts and actions to the facts. But for God there is nothing prior. If he looks within, there is only his own life, his own thought, his own will. If he looks beyond, there is only his express creation. His prerogative is absolute, and it is absurd to look for any justification, control, or occasion for it from without. The scale of human values therefore collapses in his eyes: not that he does not establish and recognise it in us for ourselves, imposed on us by our nature and circumstances: but that for him our high is no higher than our low, and our low no more ignominious than our highest. When he became man, he did not, as God, adopt our distinctions, yet he did not abolish them in us as men. Hence the compassion in Christ for our necessities, and his scorn of our pretensions. His love is not craving but sympathy, not admiration but pity. And this pity and sympathy are the more profound in that he understands our nature and possibilities far better than we do. We know what we suffer, but he knows what we miss. The blind, the lame, and the poor are aware of his mercy in relieving them; but the prudent and learned are puzzled and incredulous concerning that vague salvation which he

promises. Even his dearest disciples, who trust those promises blindly, have no notion of what they really mean. James and John, who are too shy to speak for themselves, commission their mother to ask him that, in his kingdom, they may sit one on his right hand and the other on his left. *Ye know not what ye ask*. He does not deny their devotion: they will be baptised with his baptism and they will drink the cup that he drinks; but to sit on his right hand and on his left is not for him to give, but is reserved for those for whom the Father has prepared it from all eternity.

There is a mystery here. As in the case of the day for his second coming, known only to the Father, Christ represents the absolute prerogative of God as if it were an absolute secret. It is such from the point of view of inference, presumption, or necessity. It will not be Christ's human affections that will decide the matter. It will be the same primordial freedom and groundless actuality by which God himself exists and wills what he wills. The truth is perfectly well known to God, and so to the Word, who is the very utterance of that truth in God; but the truth is not open to investigation by a reasoning mind; it is only in God, and by union with God, that it can be discovered. God must have acted, and then we may perceive, in so far as it affects us, that which he has done.

In many of the parables this absolute prerogative of God appears, which places him and his decrees beyond the reach of our wishes or reason or sense of justice. The representation of God as an absolute monarch, or as a loving father, is obviously mythical; yet it brings us much more squarely before the facts of moral life than does, for instance, the philosophy of Socrates. Socrates was a rationalist, and abandoned his first master Anaxagoras, when he found that this philosopher spoke of the sun and moon as if they were stones, without disclosing the *reason* why they existed and shone so conveniently upon us. Now reason is an admirable method by which to integrate our minds and characters, and adapt our arts to the potentialities of matter: but reason imposed on the universe is madness, because existence is necessarily irrational. Internally

the world may be as methodical and regular and calculable as it likes; yet *that it is so* will remain a perfectly arbitrary fact; and we shall soon come upon elementary data, absolutely groundless for reason to play upon, if it is not to perish by a flight into thin air. Such flights are not forbidden to the human spirit in dreams, and in certain pure arts without fixed models, like music and poetry. These are the creations of freedom and the arts of leisure. The philosophy of Socrates, and all metaphysical rationalisms, partake of this luxurious character. In them a high mental civilization overleaps its bounds, and attempts to enclose the universe within human logic and human fancy. Among the Jews the circumstance of not being speculative saved religion and literature from this danger. God was an irresponsible power, as nature actually is. He was kindly, but jealous and irascible: he prescribed laws and limits, but remained free to change or enlarge them. His thoughts were sublime and inscrutable, his love enrapturing, and his wrath terrible. In the Gospels this traditional image still fills the background, and falls in perfectly with fresh observations of nature and life, such as abound in the parables. We learn to trace the ways of God anew, with a more inward eye and a tenderer sensibility.

Thus the husbandman in the early morning engages labourers for his vineyard at the customary wages; but at noon and at the eleventh hour he still engages others, and at the end of the day pays the same wage, one penny, to them all. Here is lordliness and generosity, yet it provokes murmurs, as bounty in nature provokes murmurs among the envious who feel that they are injured because someone else is favoured. It is a vile passion, in that it closes the heart to the beauty and variety of life and mind; and a beastly passion, in that it redoubles and sanctifies the fury of accidental will in the animal. Only free imagination can bring us into sympathy with the truth and the will of God. People without free imagination think that God should have created nothing but themselves.

Sympathy with the will of God shines everywhere in the parables. It includes dramatic sympathy with the will of men also, and of men of all sorts: there is insight into the mammon of iniquity no less than into simplicity and warmth of heart. The wicked and the foolish are not hated or reviled; they too are God's creatures; but their predicament and fate are exhibited unflinchingly, because in both cases it is sympathy with the will of God that underlies and controls sympathy with created things. The lilies of the field are loved for their beauty; yet no tears are shed because they must fade. Others will bloom tomorrow: or if not, in any case God lives in eternity, with all things present to his unclouded vision, where nothing can be lost.

Such seems to be the sentiment of Christ in the Gospels in regard to natural beings and their excellence, which includes the brave side of what we call vice or crime. But there is a different note, a note of alarm, of urgency, even of despair, in regard to the soul and its supernatural destiny. The gospel must be preached, even if often without avail. We must watch and pray. We must sell all we have, take up our cross, and follow Jesus. The foolish virgins not only find themselves napping, but are too late for the wedding, and see the door shut in their faces. There will be weeping and gnashing of teeth. Now all these warnings that a catastrophe is at hand, all these fevered exhortations allow of a double interpretation. Exoterically, as the Evangelists undoubtedly understood the matter, the last day was actually at hand. A last chance of salvation was being offered to believers. Believe, be converted, or sink forever into the abyss of darkness and death. Animal vitality, superstitious horror, and Hebraic thrift were appealed to together. Come and lay your wager. If you lose, you lose nothing: if you win, you gain immortal life in a celestial paradise. Christ has come to earth to lay this alternative before us. Such is the exoteric reason for the apostolic zeal and tragic vehemence of Christ and his disciples.

Yet if we reflect on the perennial truth and lesson of the parables, and of the sympathy with the will of God that pervades

them, I think that a different esoteric signification will appear. The world was not really coming to an end. It was only Jerusalem that was to be judged and destroyed within the life of that generation. And the Church that was to be founded was to remain always a missionary Church, a leaven in the lump, a voice crying in the wilderness. The national fervour of the Jews misled them and made them conceive salvation politically and temporarily, when it can only be spiritual and individual. And even in the individual, it is not essentially a question of two periods in time, but of two levels of allegiance and affection. Instead of living concentrated in your animal will and personal fortunes, you may surrender these, as far as your heart is concerned, and attach yourself to the will of God only. Then you are saved forever, because the will of God is always and everywhere fulfilled. Your faith, your insight, your surrender, in so far as you live by them, will have made you whole.

In suggesting this spiritual interpretation for the kingdom of God, and for the means of entering into it, I am far from wishing to insinuate into the idea of Christ in the Gospels any abandonment of the ordinary eschatology. Jesus is presented to us as having actually come down from heaven, and being about to ascend into heaven again, in order to come down once more with glory to judge all nations. The urgent note in his teaching presupposes such a material background, and would not be justified without it. But the reader knows that I am not attempting to reconstruct a Life of Jesus. I am only studying the idea of Christ in the Gospels. And in that idea, beneath the legendary figure of Jesus on earth, there is undoubtedly a theological and mystical figure of Christ the son of God, the eternal Word of the Father, and the *inner fountain* of salvation within the soul of the mystic. Now between this hidden life in the heart and the cataclysms of a mythical eschatology the contrast is as sharp and ultimate as possible. Not that the images of hell and heaven are inappropriate. Weeping and gnashing of teeth are only too real in the tragedies of passion, and in physical catastrophes; while the heavenly peace and transport of union with

the will of God can hardly be exaggerated. Yet it is all, in reality, a contrast in ourselves between passion and reason, will and free imagination, egotism and love of the truth. The covetous, political, Jewish idea of salvation must be reduced, from this point of view, to a local and temporary symbol, or superstitious substitute, for a spiritual transformation. This symbol subsists in the minds of the Evangelists and passes among them for a literal truth. Without questioning that they so conceived it, a philosophic critic is not forbidden to trace back this symbol to the national ambition of the Jews, as to its origin, and to trace it forwards, as to its religious truth, to the idea of Christ implicit in the Gospels; that is to say, to the idea of God in man.



THE PROPHECIES AND THE PRECEPTS

All the Evangelists unite in telling us that Christ had a precursor, John the Baptist, a prophet announced by the prophets and one who came before him to make straight his paths. The message of John the Baptist was simple and puts in a few words the whole burden of the gospel: *Repent, for the Kingdom of Heaven is at hand*. This is a summons or command justified by a prophecy. Save for this prophecy, prompted by sheer inspiration, the call to repentance would have no force. The Jews had the Law of Moses which neither Christ nor John the Baptist denied to be the law of God, and they most scrupulously obeyed it. What had they to repent of? The Messiah would not come to correct them but to exalt them and make them and their Law supreme over the whole world. And yet the announcement that the Kingdom of Heaven was at hand did not altogether please them. The old prophecy, as now repeated, seemed to have a new tendency. It was unauthorised, and far from flattering their pride and their national ambition it seemed to threaten them. They had their covenant, and God could not change sides.

How did John the Baptist know that the Kingdom of Heaven was at hand? Was it not because his conscience rebelled against the state of mankind, whom he called a generation of vipers? And what else could have led him to fly to the desert, to live half naked

on locusts and wild honey, and to induce his astonished admirers to plunge bodily into the Jordan, as a symbol for a complete end of their old life, and the beginning of a new one? What, except the mystic aspiration of his heart, could have taught him that such penances and such ceremonies were a necessary preparation for entering the Kingdom of Heaven? If, then, the prophecy that this kingdom was at hand alone justified the urgency of his precepts, it was a spontaneous insurrection of his moral being against things as they were that had inspired that prophecy. Thus the precepts in the Gospels rest on questionable predictions for their compulsory force; but the predictions in turn spring from a profound change of allegiance in the heart, which also dictates the character of those precepts.

It was no new thing in Hebrew prophecy to invoke divine retribution for human wrongs and divine vindication for down-trodden virtue: nor was it altogether new to subordinate or neglect the law and the ritual for the sake of mercy and loving kindness. The characteristic of Christ among the prophets is that he was more than a prophet. He did more than interpret and vivify the given law; he was himself a new legislator, speaking with an authority superior to that of Moses. And he addressed a new people not so stubborn and hard of heart; a people no longer selected as a tribe from among the tribes, but picked out individually from the mass of mankind by the special grace of faith, humility, and charity. The condemnation of the world, though more sweeping in the mouth of Christ than in that of any of the prophets, and inspired by a more mystical and superhuman sense of the true good, is less vindictive and violent. He is not merciless to the alien; he is gentle to the sinner. Without abolishing degrees and distinctions he has no illusions about the saints; his best disciples are blind and of little faith; his own heart is full of sadness; and the best gift that he can leave to his followers is peace. The kingdom that he promises is not of this world: it is beyond the valley of the shadow of death.

Ostensibly the prophecies and precepts of Christ seem nothing but a revision of the Jewish prophecies and precepts. The Sermon on the Mount begins with a promise and ends with a threat. *Blessed are the meek for they shall inherit the earth; pray and give alms in secret, and thy Father which seeth in secret shall reward thee openly. And everyone that heareth these sayings of mine, and doeth them not, shall be likened unto a foolish man, which buildeth his house upon the sand; and the rain descended, and the floods came, and the wind blew, and beat upon that house; and it fell: and great was the fall of it.* The fear of the Lord would still seem to be the end as well as the beginning of wisdom, and wisdom to be the crown of life, rather than vision or love. Yet in the Sermon on the Mount there is a different element, a poetic, disenchanted, ascetic, unearthly insight, as if secrecy were in itself sweeter than blarney, poverty and sorrow freer and holier than prosperity, and the absence of all claims more blessed than all possessions. Those promises of being rewarded openly before the assembled universe, amid a blare of trumpets, because one's heart had preferred simplicity and peace, sound a little like primitive metaphors, figures of speech that belie the thought struggling for expression. Yet the Evangelists undoubtedly counted on gaining another world by renouncing this one: and the Kingdom of Heaven, the *civitas Dei*, was never content not to be also the future government of earth.

The same external agreement with the Jewish view of salvation appears in *Mark*, where a scribe, after questioning Christ concerning the greatest Commandment, and having been answered, observes, *Well, Master, thou hast said the truth: for there is one God, and there is none other but he: and to love him with all the heart, and with all the understanding, and with all the soul, and with all the strength, and to love his neighbour as himself is more than all whole burnt offerings and sacrifices. And when Jesus saw that he answered discreetly, he said unto him, Thou art not far from the Kingdom of God.* Not far, yet we are not told that he ever reached it; and when we consider the first Commandment as given in

Exodus and *Deuteronomy*, I think we may doubt it. The word "love" occurs there only by the way, as an equivalent to allegiance; and the burden of the first Commandment, and of those that follow concerning the Sabbath and against profanity, is evidently loyalty to legal and tribal unity. There is no suggestion of any inward or mystical love, of any consuming fire or transforming insight. The well-taught Scribe's speech about love of God and love of one's neighbour amounts simply to this: Be a good Jew, and also be a good man.

Thus confirmed in his good opinion of the law and the prophets, of Jesus, and of himself, the Scribe goes away happy. Not so the rich young man who, having been well-behaved all his life, nevertheless asks what he should do to be saved. And to him Christ adds what he did not add to the Scribe: *If thou wouldst be perfect, sell all thou hast, give to the poor, take up thy cross and follow me.* The rich young man had always done his duty in the world, and this advice seemed contrary to that duty. Yet doing his duty had always left him unhappy; and he goes away sorrowful, foreseeing that in the other world as well as in this he is destined, without hope, to live in desire.

These two episodes show clearly that there are two sides, or two levels, to Christ's precepts and prophecies. One is exoteric and a continuation of the prophetic teaching that, to secure the protection of Jehovah, righteousness and love are more important than religious observances, although these too should not be neglected. The other side or level of Christ's teaching is more like Buddha's, and strikes at the roots of self-will, illusion, and passion within the soul. In Christ's spiritual discipline, as in Buddha's, there is nothing superstitious or terrified. He comes eating and drinking, lives familiarly among sinful men, and what is more, and not found in Buddha, exercises a personal magic, a direct ascendancy of secret love, over those whom he chooses, such that when he says, *Follow me*, the cross that is to be taken up seems light and the death to be suffered seems sweet. With him a complete self-surrender means

less an escape from all evil and suffering than a supervening courage that can endure and overwhelm them. There is militant chivalry in the purity of Christ. The mystical transformation brought about by his grace consecrates persons without abolishing them; and the illusion that he dispels does not touch the reality of mundane things but only the attachment to them that enslaved the spirit.

Here we see one advantage that the Jewish mythology inherited by Christ—since a man must inherit some mythology—had over the Indian. It preserved a firm apprehension of the real world; a firm distinction of real persons, earthly and heavenly. It thereby retained terms between which spiritual affections and spiritual unions might be established, and did not attempt to keep the light of spirit burning without the fire of the flesh.

This realistic and brave holiness belongs properly to a God who had created the natural world and has no reason to fear it: who indeed loves it so much that he has adopted it for a habitation and voluntarily suffered all that such habitation imposes on an incarnate spirit. For the world and the life of all animals are wonderful to contemplate from above, but terrible to endure from within, as incarnate spirit must endure them. In Christ alone God has chosen to endure in his own person all that he had imposed on his creatures, yet without losing for a moment the sovereignty of his eternal mind. For him, in his divine immutability, all things, including his own Incarnation and Passion, remain a spectacle; they compose a part of that all-embracing truth which, when vivified into knowledge, is his very being. Yet he has chosen not merely to contemplate that spectacle but in part to enact it, like a dramatic poet who should play one of his own characters, and actually live that brief life, as in a dream.

Consider now the judgment that such a creator, become one of his own creatures, would pass on the rest of creation, and what a double aspect that judgment would have. Instinct, and the intrinsic problem of each character, would dictate to the player how he

should play that part. These demands would form the law and the prophets for the theatre, and the art of satisfying them would bring its natural reward. But if now the actor, himself a potential poet, were not content with that, but asked what he should do to be saved from the radical falseness and the thousand sorrows of a player's life, then the poet-actor in him would say: "If you would be perfect, drop all your masks and disguises, identify yourself only with the pure spirit that conceives but is not blinded by them, and follow me into the realm of truth, where nothing is false and nothing is transitory."

There is another trait in Christ's prophecies and precepts, at first sight contrary to his gentleness, that may be understood when we remember that he is God in man: I mean his severity in some directions, his absoluteness, and his threats of damnation. For instance, he sends his disciples two by two to preach in the surrounding villages, imposing on them the most austere poverty and trust in Providence. He endows them, it is true, with some power to cast out devils and to heal diseases, but doubtless under many obscure conditions, and certainly without communicating his own magic insight and ascendancy. Yet he condemns to perdition the towns that fail to welcome them: it will be easier in the last day for Sodom and Gomorrah than for those towns. And in his own preaching, especially against the Pharisees and in his discourses in the Temple, recorded in *John*, he denounces his hearers in enigmatic and irritated language, such as they seem hardly to have done anything to provoke. Why is he so much concerned to defend and to assert himself before men of slow understanding entangled in inveterate prejudices? It is not in order to enlighten them; he has little hope of that. Is it not rather the very hopelessness of their case that throws him back from his habitual humanity to his solitary unseen divinity, and fills him with wrath—because, after all, he is a man, too—at their blindness, and with sorrow at their missing all that they perversely miss? Theirs is the stupid viciousness of bad troops, enlisting in a good cause, and then straggling,

pillaging, and deserting on the march. He, their commander by right, blushes for them, and sees in their fate a most just punishment. That so human a reaction, such indignation at seeing human nature withered before it flowers, should be attributed to God may seem strange to a philosopher, if his idea of deity is speculative and not traditional. But the Gospels, let me repeat, move within the frame of a monarchical theism. To be a jealous God, exacting homage, issuing commands that may be disobeyed, cursing the disobedient, and troubled that his own works should not come up to his intentions, then seems the very essence of divine holiness and justice. The God in Christ is therefore more severe than the man and less sympathetic. It would have been derogatory to his sovereignty to be too humane; for he was in some sense a rival power having enemies, whom it behooved him to crush and to punish.

Against this background of celestial despotism, the mercy and brotherly love in Christ shine the more beautifully: and the contrast is not artificial or accidental. The background of life is really despotic in respect to human aspirations and meanderings. It affords limited and temporary opportunities, it exacts special labours, and bestows arbitrary graces. It would have been a falsification of divine government to have represented it otherwise. And when a son of God has come down from sitting on the right hand of Power, in order to reconcile mankind to his Father, two things will be requisite for the success of his mission. He must proclaim the decrees of God in all their unchangeable severity; and he must probe the heart of man to its depths, so that once for all it may discover what things, in view of those decrees, it must renounce, and in what things it may find a sure and perfect happiness. Christ's sympathy with mankind will be all the more poignant, in that he understands all that is forbidden them, and the perpetual distraction of their souls in pursuing it; and his longing will be all the more intense that they should find the narrow path of obedience and of self-correction which would lead them to their only possible perfection and joy.

We may see in the Sermon on the Mount how the new gospel stands to the old law. It does not abolish that law on its positive side, but transforms it spiritually; for in the first place, the ideal of life proposed in the law, though attainable with good conduct, was not a truly human ideal, but barbarous and adopted only provisionally, because of the hardness and blindness of men's hearts. Towards God it was obedient, but for man it was unsatisfying. Not that by way of material goods the spirit in man requires more than what the old morality promised and could secure. It demands very much less; and the supercharge is an enslaving burden, and the source of endless competitive crimes. Outwardly, then, the new gospel will introduce retrenchment, simplification, indifference. Inwardly, however, it will open up immense vistas. The Son of God is now leading. He is a native of heaven. To despise the fatness and glitter of earth is not difficult for him: he has all knowledge, all glory, all love perpetually before his eyes. And the soul of man, made in God's image, really lives happy only by partaking in those divine things.

So the Beatitudes begin: *Blessed are the poor in spirit*, that is, those for whom all the things they possess or desire are as crumbs fallen from God's table; who claim nothing and hoard nothing, but accept all and rejoice in all that God has given, no matter to whom. To be meek, merciful, and pure in heart, to mourn, to hunger and thirst after righteousness, to be peacemakers and persecuted, reviled and slandered is blessed and a just ground for rejoicing. The crowd that came to be healed and perhaps to be fed might only have been astonished at these maxims; yet the maxims were justified by corresponding prophecies, which all could hear with relief. They were all unfortunates, and it was already a kind of blessedness to hear that they were to be filled, to inherit the earth, and also the Kingdom of Heaven, to obtain mercy, to see God, and to be called the children of God.

Christ knew that he was to come again in glory to his everlasting kingdom: yet the extraordinary change of heart that had preceded,

and the passion that had merited that reward, could not help transforming the character of the reward afterwards acceptable. The flesh-pots of Egypt, Job's thousand she-asses and fresh family of children, Solomon's gilded temple and his three hundred wives, assuredly would not do. On the other hand, it would be a little sad to have only the prophets' reward who after being stoned to death were frequently quoted. Shall we say that seeing God is only a figure of speech for inheriting the earth, or that inheriting the earth is only a figure of speech for seeing God? Or shall we say more discriminatingly that inheriting the earth may be the reward of some, and seeing God the reward of others, according to their nature and aspirations? Perhaps this last is what the divine economy of nature really has in store for us, and what we may suppose to have been in Christ's mind; yet his passionate preference cannot be doubted for the ascetic prelude to seeing God. And how should it be otherwise for a son of God, who is not merely called a son but really is one? How indifferent, how pervasively shabby and sad must all the cravings and pleasures of this world seem to him, and how blessed any sorrow, any revulsion that frees the soul from that animal bewitchment and enables it to turn, at least in remote aspiration, to the heavenly peace that was Christ's native element!

Every anecdote reporting some act or some saying of Jesus should be interpreted as realising a divine plan and announcing the speedy end of the present phase of human existence and the beginning of another. This is the essence of the glad tidings which are the gospel.

The first words of the Sermon on the Mount breathe these pre-occupations. The Kingdom of Heaven is at hand: *therefore*, blessed are the poor, the humble, the down-trodden, the lovers of righteousness. Very soon the tables will be turned, and they will be on top. *Therefore*, there would be lack of faith in troubling about the morrow. But here, in the very act of confirming the Jewish expectations of a millennium, these expectations are revised and spiritually transformed: the mystic flower of Christianity breaks out on

the dry stem of Judaism. Not by war, not by action, will the Kingdom of God arrive, but by prayer and fasting, by an absolute passivity, a perfect purity taking possession of the inner man. Nor is it merely the manner of the coming revolution that is paradoxically transformed, so that the preparation for it has become ascetic and its advent miraculous, but the character of the Kingdom of Heaven, too, becomes unrecognisable. Perhaps no political revolution is needed at all: perhaps all national hopes and hatreds and boasts are unregenerate; perhaps the Kingdom of Heaven has already come unobserved; perhaps it is already among us. We seem to be on the verge of escaping, in the mystical direction, from that positive religious faith with which we began. The sun shines on the unjust no less than on the just: if we forgive our enemies, God will forgive us; he watches over us as over the sparrows; he clothes us as the lilies of the field; and when he sends winter to us and we fall or wither, what odds will that make if we have resigned our will, live by sympathy with his creative love, and have identified ourselves with that fatherly impartiality by which all things are perpetually fostered and renewed?

Christianity never passed altogether into this mystical heaven, pulling up the ladder after it: it prudently preserved both the Jewish prophetic hopes and the ascetic foundations on which such mystic insights must rest if they are to remain Christian and moral. This double allegiance is covered in the Lord's Prayer under the simple name of the *will of God*, which bears two different meanings. First we pray that the will of God may be done on earth as it is in heaven, that his will may be done, and his kingdom may come. This clearly assumes that the reign of God on earth has not yet begun, and that his will is not done here. Presently, however, we beg God to give us our daily bread, which assumes that he reigns over our earthly fortunes; and then that he deliver us from evil or from the Evil One, as if our moral welfare and decisions were also in his hands: for it is he that delivers us from temptation when we resist it. And if we add the coda to this prayer, we con-

firm emphatically this second view that God's will is done everywhere: *for thine is the kingdom and the power and the glory for ever and ever.*

Nor is this a merely verbal or theoretical ambiguity: there is a corresponding alternative in the sentiment with which we say: *Thy will be done.* On the one hand this is a sigh, full of resignation: we recognise our impotence, the vanity and blindness of our wishes, and the absolute authority of God to govern the world as he wills; an authority to which both reason and piety teach us to bow. On the other hand the same words breathe aspiration, joy in seeing the work of God done and his works unfold before us, with pride in being in our modest measure vehicles and instruments of his power. And here, in the region of emotion, it is not difficult to see how the two feelings, at first so contrary, may become ultimately one: because resignation, if complete, if our private desires and interests could be wholly surrendered, would of itself have become enthusiasm. We should feel that the will of God had been secretly done always, even in those things that had seemed to be done by the wicked most contrary to his will but really to his greater glory. This sentiment, however, would revert to the mystical view, transcending all moral distinctions, all indignation at wrong, and all pity of suffering. It would also subvert that monarchical theism which is the foundation of Christianity. It would represent God to have willed and approved as creator all that he forbids as legislator and punishes as judge.

Orthodox theology meets this difficulty with courage. God is a moral being; his will is selective, he loves and hates; and as the Koran also tells us, he has made the world not for a toy, but in order to render manifest the absolute contrast between good and evil. Therefore the conscience and the bias of the human heart, though enlightened by union with the will of God, are confirmed by that union. But in man the love of God may be misled by ignorance of the good: and he is able and in fact compelled to act in that partial ignorance. There lies his free will and his danger. God does

not share the false judgment by which the erring man chooses evil, thinking it good: but God allows that false judgment to arise and to breed its terrible consequences, because his own love of the good and hatred of evil are exhibited and enhanced by that tragedy. And that tragedy for him is no mere spectacle: in the person of Christ he too has enacted it.

A further pregnant petition in the Lord's Prayer, Jewish in the letter and Christian in the spirit, is this: *Forgive us our debts as we forgive our debtors*. The background here shows us a monarchical God whose wrath is kindled at all who love what he hates or hate what he loves, and whose justice appoints condign punishments for these offences, according to their gravity. We legally *owe God reparation* for departing in this way from his will. The debt may be cancelled, however, at least for the guilty individual, if he repents, corrects himself, and offers the appointed sin-offering. But now a fresh condition is added, specifically Christian, which opens up a prospect in quite another direction. Our fellow creatures also often hate what we love, or love what we hate, and act accordingly; so that by analogy, if we put our interest in our conscience in the place of God, they owe us a corresponding debt: and Christ now warns us that we must not ask God to forgive us our debts until we have forgiven our debtors. How inwardly, how speculatively, are we intended to take this warning? Is it simply patent offences, blows, thefts, or insults, that we are to forgive? Or must we forgive our neighbour for offending us in his heart, by loving what we hate or hating what we love? And if we forgive him for this, which is what we are asking God to forgive in us, how can we preserve our loyalty and courage in sticking to our own conscience and in following the law of our own God, of which our neighbour perhaps knows nothing? Why then does not God himself begin by forgiving the heathen and the lawbreakers, and by forgiving *us*? But I will not pursue this inquiry here, which would carry us beyond the *cadre* of monarchical theism.

There is a good deal of disillusionment in the Sermon on the

Mount. The reason for loving our enemies, and sinners generally, is not that by our wonderful kindness we may convert them, win their friendship, and make them no less virtuous than ourselves: the reason is that God loves them as much as he loves us, that we too are sinners, and that they too are unhappy and in a deep sense innocent. Yet the disillusionment about religion is deeper still, and double-dyed. Established religion is a convention; the Sabbath was made for man, not man for the Sabbath; and the living spirit may speak with authority as against Scriptures and priests: nevertheless, we must submit to the priests and to the Scriptures. Nothing would be gained by rebellion. The immense folly of mankind, the hopeless blindness of the heart, must be endured, and can be vanquished only by being understood.

Here are two notes that might seem, at first blush, to express natural morality not merely apart from religion but even in opposition to it: the preference given to brotherly love over religious observances, and the preference given to intention and feeling over outward achievement. But both these sentiments, as proclaimed in the Sermon on the Mount, are mystically inspired and destructive of merely human bonds or merely human ambitions. Brotherly love, extended to enemies, dissolves the state, undermines the character, and alienates the mind from every positive art or allegiance: the biological and political basis of virtue evaporates into cosmic sympathies. So also with the sufficiency of inwardness. A good intention may be more valuable than a good action, in that it is an earnest of many systematically good actions to come; but in itself a good intention is a vapour, a bit of dream, a string of unspoken words; and nothing is politically more worthless. To regard such a momentary feeling as making the whole difference between sin and salvation, is an extreme instance of religion replacing morality: and though on a deathbed such a substitution may be edifying and harmless, at any other moment of life it is destructive of the moral order. The moral order of antiquity, which is the secular moral order, was indeed on a sickbed when Christianity arose, and sub-

stituted a morality founded on religion for one which man had no longer the strength to draw from his whole nature.

As to the precepts, while the transformation in sentiment is complete and the language of the Commandments is changed, their effect remains the same. The sin is traced from outward actions to their psychological roots, from murder to the passion that prompts it, from adultery to the lust it satisfies. Yet the Ten Commandments, also, forbade *coveting* our neighbour's wife or anything that is his: they thereby recognised the same derivation of action, and of the guilt of it, from an inner disposition. That which blows like a fresh wind of emancipation and insight through all these maxims is the spirit of the Son of God, of God in man, of a superhuman reason taking possession of a human heart and flowering there into holiness. *Love your enemies, bless them that hate you, pray for them which despitefully use you and persecute you.* In a word, resist not evil.

Why this unnatural demand? The atmosphere of the Gospels is too Jewish for the principle that virtue is its own reward to be clearly established there; and we are soothed by the promise that the meek shall inherit the earth, and that our Father who seeth in secret will reward us openly. But the meek do not wish to inherit the earth of the proud; they wish to live in a gentler heaven, and they do not ask for a reward less silent than their prayer. When we have cleared away this possible misunderstanding, there are two great blessings inherent in this interior sacrifice of nature to spirit. One blessing is complete peace within oneself; the other blessing is ready understanding and sympathy towards all other beings. Christ does not offer us external peace, peace among nations or peace among opinions. He offers us only *his* peace: the peace he left to his disciples when he breathed on them and said, *Receive ye the Holy Ghost*. External peace is impossible so long as the world endures, because matter is indefinitely fertile and develops into all sorts of incompatible growths, that inevitably hinder and seek to supplant one another. And so long as the spirit is dominated

by the will of any one of these growths, it suffers the contradiction and defeats, and accepts the criterion of value, proper to that creature. Yet such partiality and subjection are intrinsically foreign to the spirit; it feels and knows itself to be caught in a trap, because its essence is to see and to love all things impartially, as does God who created them. It lives, then, in inner contradiction, until the Holy Ghost is breathed into it, infusing new strength and loyalty into its pristine candour. And although spirit in the creature must always preserve an accidental seat and centre of survey, with a limited range of vision and limited sympathies, yet it knows that these limitations are personal and accidental; and virtually, in its worship and union with God, it surrenders them and overcomes them in intention, and escapes error by confessing the partiality and ignorance that incarnation has imposed upon it.

In whom, indeed, could this predicament of the spirit, native to it in every man, be conceived more dramatically or uttered more boldly than in a son of God actually descended from heaven? In the Sermon on the Mount we read: *Agree with thine adversary quickly; while thou art in the way with him; lest at any time the adversary deliver thee to the judge, and the judge deliver thee to the officer, and thou be cast into prison.* Verbally, here, we have a counsel of modest prudence and compromise; yet that is hardly the motive that renders bickering and bargaining and counting pennies odious to Christ. The real motive is surely indifference to such trifles, and perfect willingness that the man who is stripping him of his coat should get his cloak also.

Another verbal mannerism that for us, at least, distorts these spiritual counsels is oriental hyperbole. It is a mere idiom that makes an Evangelist say that *all* Jerusalem and *all* Judea came out to meet Jesus: the meaning can only be that people from sundry parts of Judea and of Jerusalem did so. Similar latitude of expression appears in the precepts about plucking out the eye and cutting off the hand that offends us. These are graphic images, like making oneself a eunuch for the Kingdom of Heaven's sake. To take such

advice literally, as has sometimes been done, is to miss the ascetic discipline really recommended. One of the great beauties in the idea of Christ, as afterwards carefully thought out by the Fathers of the Church, was precisely that his humanity was in no way mutilated, but in all ways exalted, consecrated, and controlled by the spirit. This is a much harder path for us to tread than mutilation, either physical or moral; because it is very true that people can put up rather contentedly with one eye, one foot, or one idea. But these people are precisely the most avid and contentious: they want to drive everybody away with their crutch. Patience and sweetness follow rather on possession of all faculties and acquaintance with all temptations, when they have been turned back by the experience or the foreknowledge of their vanity. We then pluck out and cut off the deceitfulness from the eye and the cupidity from the hand, dedicating both to liberal uses.

We may say of Christ's human nature what he said about the Mosaic law, that he came not to destroy but to fulfil it. And this was singular charity and lack of prejudice on his part, when he was naturally the Son of God, something that we never really become even by the most laborious adoption; yet it was precisely his incomparable elevation that made it possible for him to descend no matter how low without being contaminated. He even becomes jealous of his appointed humanity and appointed sufferings, as if they had been a special privilege. Note the vivacity of his protest when the good Peter suggests that Christ's chosen Passion and death must never come to pass. *Get thee behind me, Satan*, he cries; not so much, perhaps, to the well-meaning Peter, as to the echo of the real tempter, that had once suggested to him the use of his divine power to elude hunger and defy the danger of falling from the pinnacle of the Temple. No doubt fidelity to his Father's will was the fundamental ground for repelling such suggestions; yet he had not become a man against his own inclination or without fully knowing what awaited him. There was therefore in him a rooted affection, as it were, to his humanity, and a consequent

immense pity for that humanity disfigured and corrupted in others. He hugged his cross with a love that did not wish to escape suffering. Not at least so long as suffering existed anywhere: for there would have been a kind of blindness and insensibility in a God that floated in absolute bliss while his innumerable creatures struggled and writhed in themselves and with one another. It was necessary to create a bridge between existence and eternity, between man and God: but not by destroying man, which if he had once lived would be impossible for the divine mind, since that mind is a name for the truth itself; nor yet by denying God, which for mankind would be foolishly to deny on the one hand their dependence and on the other hand their criteria of judgment. The dominant power—call it God, fate, or matter—cannot be abolished: an ideal end, though it may not be discerned, cannot help lying at the terminus of every endeavour. The vital problem is so to remodel our endeavours that their ideal end may become attainable, in conformity with the nature of things. Now for this, a long agony, a profound transformation of the will must occur: and this transformation Christ comes to prescribe, while in his own person he endures that agony.

The patience of Christ with the load of hereditary evil that weighs upon the world is no less heroic than his determination to suffer the consequences of that evil. He is full of compassion for physical trials, especially for that sort of madness which is a physical derangement or possession by a devil. The sins of the flesh, too, he forgives as readily as he heals its miseries: neither can disgust him with being a man. What taxes his patience is the incapacity of the virtuous to understand the principle of mercy; also, the incapacity of the ready intellect to understand the necessity of faith. The cities that reject the Apostles, he had said, shall fare worse than Sodom at the Last Judgment. Yet when his favourite disciples, "the sons of thunder" said, *Lord wilt thou that we command fire to come down from heaven, and consume them, even as Elias did?* . . . *he turned and rebuked them and said, Ye know*

not what manner of spirit ye are of. For the Son of Man is not come to destroy men's lives, but to save them.

This time, indeed, in his unglorified human body, Christ had come to save men's lives, or rather their souls; and his human heart was set on this mission of mercy. Yet he could not have forgotten his frequent prophecies that in the end the Son of God, in his glorified human body, would say to these very Samaritans that he had come to save: *Depart from me, ye cursed, into everlasting fire.* Evidently his heart and his present mission stood on one side; his foreknowledge, the example of Elias, and the impulse of his own disciples stood on the other. Between these two sides we may imagine a contention like that between Abraham and the Lord concerning the fate of Sodom. Peradventure there were fifty righteous found in that city, or forty, or twenty, or ten. Would the Lord slay the righteous with the wicked? The text of *Genesis* tells us that *the Lord went his way, as soon as he had left communing with Abraham; and Abraham returned unto his place.* So the two contending commitments must have done in the mind of Christ, when he had done communing with himself; and we know what the solution was in the case of Sodom. The city was consumed with fire falling from heaven, but the individual Lot, Abraham's brother, was saved with his family, his backward-looking wife excepted. Just this was the solution found by the Christian conscience: the world was condemned, but the individual soul could always be saved out of it. Christ's profound insight into the individual heart, his knowledge of its helplessness, its confusion under the pressure of custom and of circumstances, and its untried possibilities, broke down the collective responsibility of the ancients and picked out the elect, contrary to expectation and to human judgment, from amongst little children and great sinners.

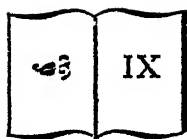
This vocation to heal, to rescue, to console, this insistence that all men should forgive, tolerate, and love one another, even their enemies, surely all this rests on a direct sympathy with life and pity for life more profound than any purpose or any reason. It

does not abolish or obscure moral distinctions; it does not turn away, shocked and rebellious, from the worm that gnaws and the fire that torments eternally. These phrases are metaphorical, but they indicate irremediable realities; and Christ tells us of a sin that shall never be forgiven, the sin against the Holy Ghost.

What *is* the Holy Ghost? Is it not, perhaps, the very spirit of love and understanding that forgives every sin, every offence, every contrariety in the movement of things against our own movement? Is it not the spirit of truth enlightening in all rational creatures the blind vehemence of will and passion? The unpardonable sin is the refusal to pardon: the impudence of being an arbitrary creature and denying to all other arbitrary creatures the right to live. And this sin is unpardonable because it is incorrigible. The original impulse of life imposes it, in imposing the necessity of feeding, breeding, and fighting. For that reason it must last as long as life lasts, and must bring forever its inevitable punishment of hatred and suffering. Escape from it is impossible on that natural plane of life. To be saved we must be born again. Christ by becoming man, by ascending again from earth to heaven, and by sending the Holy Ghost to inspire the Church, has taught us due allegiance to our native humanity, together with a truly human way of transcending it.

The precepts of Christ thus rest logically on his prophecies, and these rest on the fact, assumed in the Gospels, that he is the Son of God, with a superhuman sentiment about man and a superhuman ideal of what man is called to become. This superhuman sentiment takes a human name, *love*, for this Son of God is the son of man also. But what kind of love is this that extends to all mankind and especially to one's enemies, to the deformed, insane, vicious, and disreputable? There is not a trace in it of that delight and pride in perfect human *virtù* which had inspired the Jews themselves in their palmy days. Who was their national hero? David, a comely bold shepherd, ready with his sling and his harp, faithful in friendship, adulterous in love, chieftain of a marauding

band, become king by popular acclamation, dancing and leaping before the Ark, and conquering a considerable kingdom to make the glory of his son Solomon. That is the sort of man that men spontaneously love, and that they would love to be. Compare that figure with Christ, that life with Christ's life, and you see that the Christian love of mankind is not natural love at all, but something else, charity. It is divine compassion, based on perfect unprejudiced insight into the helplessness of man, his weakness, his childish passions, his horrible sufferings and his pitiful end: and this fate seems all the more pitiful in that a spark of celestial spirit lies hidden in those ashes and might be kindled into a different life altogether, a life of pure vision and pure joy. To this ulterior possibility the son of God is naturally sensitive: he is leading a divine life in the midst of his humble surroundings: the contrast between this adopted earth and his native heaven is only too violent in his eyes. He is obliged sometimes to flee to the desert to escape the pressure of that contrast, to be alone again with himself, with his Father, with the immensities in which mankind is lost. And yet now he is himself a man; and that fact makes his charity towards his fellow men very different from the lordly love of mankind that his Father had always manifested; for he had created them like the other animals, and had even specially chosen and favoured some of them, to raise them to a clearer knowledge and worship of himself, and to enjoy the spectacle of their fidelity, their stumblings, and their repentances. When God had become man, those dramatic episodes had come to an end. Henceforth the adventures of mankind on earth, without losing their poignancy, had lost their supremacy. It was the adventures, so to speak, of man within himself, the transformation of the soul, that now mattered. With this transformation the prophecies and precepts of Christ are exclusively concerned.



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Prayer is at once the most childlike element in religion and the most spiritual: for it begins with a cry for help or a gesture of surrender and it ends with complete self-forgetfulness and absorption in the divine life. There is nothing, therefore, in which the two natures in Christ might be expected to reveal themselves in clearer contrast and union than in his prayer. We may presume, however, that the prayers that would most enlighten us were never overheard by the disciples or revealed to the Evangelists. Only those appear that were human enough to be proposed as models for the Christian community, especially what we call the Lord's Prayer, which is not his prayer at all, but expressly recommended as suitable for us to repeat, and to repeat in common. For the initial form of address, in the first person plural, shows that it is intended for public occasions; mankind is seen as a unit, with identical needs and all in the same predicament. This is our natural feeling in moments of public disaster or rejoicing, but hardly that which accompanies us when we retreat to our closet and shut the door, as we are elsewhere advised to do, in order truly to pray. The divine point of view thus seems to creep even into this formula, meant for human lips. We are seen in the mass, as the *genus homo*, rather than as individual souls, and we are expected to pray in chorus.

As to the characteristic word "Father," rare though not unknown

before in addressing God, a great deal might be said. In modern times, it is gratefully accepted as showing confidence in the tenderness of God towards ourselves, and our perfect safety in his hands: it revives the feelings of the young child carried in arms or begging to be carried. In other days, the word was felt to be rather presumptuous; so in the prelude to it in the Mass we read: "admonished by thy healthful precepts, we *dare* to say: Our Father," etc. From this point of view it would be the divine sonship of Christ that would have prompted him to assimilate us in this undeserved way to his own station and intimacy with God: this would be a part, then, of the new, ambitious, superhuman endeavour to lift the soul into union with the deity.

A naturalist, on the other hand, might detect, in this use of the word "Father," a profound atavism. It was the father, not always an affectionate father, that ruled the ancient household. To him everything was submitted for judgment; he was the only defence against beasts and against elder brothers; life and death were in his hands. So conceived, this expression would be far from presumptuous. It would mean implicit submission and readiness to obey, as does the oriental custom of falling on one's face before a shrine or a throne, or striking the ground thrice with the forehead, or even as does our attenuated practice of kneeling or bowing. Autocratic parents and monarchs are often regarded as enemies; these acts of renewed allegiance signify that all our hostility is disarmed, as nowadays on the field of battle does the soldiers' practice of holding up their empty hands in sign of surrender. The Greeks when they prayed also held up their open hands, but here besides homage there was perhaps a sense of opening one's arms to receive a superior influence. To all these things there may be some analogy in this eloquent opening to the Lord's Prayer. We approach the God of heaven.

As we proceed, the recognition of divine sovereignty is modified by other shades of feeling. First a wish is superadded. We not only acknowledge but we desire that God should be sovereign.

That his name should be hallowed, that his kingdom should come and that his will should be done are almost synonymous ideas, repeated after the Hebrew poetic model; and they involve a most serious problem. What is the sense of desiring or praying for something which is already a fact? For if God is sovereign, his will is already being done everywhere; and if he is not sovereign, what is the sense of asking him to make himself so? Here the text helps us out with a distinction. We pray that God's will may be done *on earth*, as it is done in heaven. A part of the universe, and perhaps also of our own wills, is subject to him, but another part is not. We desire that this rebellious part may disappear: but the fact that it is rebellious seems to make it absurd to beg God to suppress it. We ought to address ourselves rather to the rebels, or to our own sinful side, and persuade them to change their wills so that we might all live happily at peace with God.

The contradiction is due no doubt to the metaphorical language proper to monarchical theism; there is no contradiction in the heart of the suppliant. He is sincerely giving voice to his aspiration and addressing the hidden fountains of power, whatever they may be, not because he thinks he can change them but because he cannot silence his heart. Now the Son of God, having become man, does not wish to silence his human heart, and does not wish us to silence ours. Therefore he directs us to pray, yet not superstitiously, not without submitting our desires to the actual decrees of God, whatever these may be. Prayer, so chastened, passes towards its mystical issue. It continues to express poetically the troubles and longings of the soul, but in expressing them tends to transcend them, to accept defeat, to make a victory of that acceptance, and to redeem itself by self-transformation. All poetry contains this catharsis; there the pleasure of singing turns what was a sorrow into a subtle joy.

Having prayed grandly for the greater glory of God, we are taught to pray modestly for our own needs. This contrast between the first and the second parts of the Lord's Prayer shows what a

pathetic aspect human life wore in his mind. He does not stop to ask for the things that even a pious natural man would most desire, such as health, security, domestic happiness, or immortality; much less for such vanities as wealth, beauty, or science. Something to eat to-day is enough. "Daily bread" may indeed be understood, metaphorically, to cover all physical conveniences; yet the ascetic, abstinent, minimal claims are evident which we are encouraged to make in this direction. Christ's heart is full of the joy of heaven: when it turns to earth, it can only suffer. This appears also when we come to the moral life. We are to pray to be delivered from evil, or from the Evil One, to be protected from the danger of falling again into his hands, and if we do so, to be forgiven. If physically human life is all privation, morally it is all peril and guilt. Most indicative, however, of the spirit of Christ is the condition he prefixes to our petition for mercy. Forgive us, we must say, as we forgive. If we come to offer those high praises to God, and remember that we owe something to our neighbour, we must first go and pay that debt, and come and praise God afterwards.

What can be the secret of this tenderness in Christ towards the guilty, of this insistence that we should not judge or retaliate or defend ourselves? Is it that he sees the beam in the revengeful eye, and challenges him who is without sin to cast the first stone? Yet if this were all, we should be in the presence of a great despair in regard to human virtue. The whole race of criminals should go free because not one of them was good enough to be the hangman. Judgment and vengeance would then indeed be the Lord's exclusively, but would probably be terrible. Such a sentiment is not absent from the mind of Christ. It is part of the general sense that a crisis was at hand, the world in its last throes, and that the only solution was to warn it, to turn away from it, and to pray for the advent of the new era. Yet there was a deeper reason for mercifulness in Christ and for his insistence on mercy in us. He naturally took the point of view of the Creator, who, however offended he might be as a legislator, was after all the parent of all

these erring souls, equally near to all and as familiar with one as with another. He knew only too well that each had been born helpless, sinful, and entangled in a net of oppressive circumstances. Moreover, Christ knew by experience something that his Father could know only in idea, namely, that in each of these unhappy creatures a spark of spirit was continually breaking out, struggling, and being smothered amongst the ashes. It was in kind the same spirit that shone so gloriously in God from all eternity, yet in fortune so different! And since in Christ this single spirit was aware at once of that glory and of this distress, can we wonder that in each sinner he should overlook the cumulus of dust, and think only of the buried and almost extinguished spirit? He recognised it with compassion even in the miserable devils that he cast out in pity for their victims: not that the devils were not wicked or the victims mad, but that both madness and wickedness would only be increased in the world if we excited ourselves to madness and wickedness against them. Therefore he counselled us to endure evil patiently, neutralising it as much as possible at its source by cold disinterestedness and abstention, until our prayers should be granted at last, and the Kingdom of Heaven should appear.

Still more significant of Christ's secret character are the prayers that he utters in his own person. That he should pray at all raises a problem for theology and for the psychology of religion: for being God in man he would be praying to himself, or to a part of himself: and more glaringly than in our distracted prayers this contradiction would arise in asking a good and omniscient God to do anything but what he is doing. Yet precisely in the conjunction of aspiration with accepted plight in the same person and at the same moment, we may hope to understand better the necessity of both and the reason for it.

The two appear most clearly in Christ's prayer in the Garden. It was an agony: there was a sweat of blood; there were coming and goings through the sleepless night; there were passionate repetitions of the same words: *O my Father, if it be possible, I*

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this cup pass from me: nevertheless not as I will, but as thou wilt. And again: *O my Father, if this cup may not pass away from me, except I drink it, thy will be done.* Here is submission, but a submission to an alien force, against which the whole soul speaks passionately contrary. It is like the pleadings and tears of a mother over a dying child; she sees the black cloud coming, and a total, cruel, unnecessary blackness. She has heard that the gods can do anything; it may yet be possible that they should help her, and she throws herself on her face before them. Yet Christ is Son of God: in heaven his will and his Father's will were identical, and he has become man that he might be able to suffer this very Passion and drink this very cup. Only an hour before, he has instituted the sacrament of the Eucharist, to be a memorial and a renewal forever of the sacrifice he is about to make. Many times he has foretold to his puzzled disciples that he is to be seized, maltreated, condemned and put to death. Once, when Peter protested that such a thing should never be, we know that he said: *Get thee behind me, Satan.* The coming Passion has been thus known and thrice accepted. And as to the possibility of avoiding it, how can he have any doubt? Is he not going to say, an hour later, to that same Peter, who draws a sword to defend him: *Thinkest thou that I cannot now pray to my Father, and he shall presently give me more than twelve legions of angels?* Nothing, then, was easier than to let that cup pass from him, if he himself had willed it. It was not his Father that denied anything or made it impossible: it was not submission to an alien will that cost him this terrible struggle. It was division within himself, as all mortal struggle must be within oneself. It was the stirrings of his adopted humanity, or rather of its animal part, against his fixed purpose.

It may surprise us, with our conventional notions of Christ (which already in the fourth Gospel begin to grow abstract and non-human) that these animal stirrings should have been so violent, and that he should seem to have forgotten for a moment his own free choices and resolutions. But as the theologians tell

the Word in becoming flesh assumed a *perfect* humanity; a *complete* human psyche, as well as a human body. Now one of the richest endowments of the human psyche is the dramatic imagination, the faculty of acting out a part, working out a motive, finding words and gestures and actions that express it. This is the faculty that creates dreams in sleep and genius in natures that are wide awake and simultaneously aware of many circumstances. It is not necessary to prove that the author of the parables could not have lacked dramatic imagination. Those are graphic pictures and simple words drawn from the life and manners of the ancient East; but more vivid images still, and stronger words, would irresistibly flood a mind so endowed by nature when that mind was swept by profound elemental currents: the impulse to live, the close approach of death, the scandal of apparent failure, the blindness of mankind, the bitterness of love wasted and of sufferings borne in vain. In a reflective hour all such impulses equalise and balance one another in the rational mind: but in a sleepless night, between solemn partings and a cruel death, imagination is more vehement; it works out each theme separately, histrionically, exuberantly, hyperbolically, as in a dream, and while the stage is occupied with one passion, an opposed passion, and a supervening judicial reason, cannot be heard. That the whole bitterness of his life—and it must have been full of bitterness—should have flooded the mind of Christ during that vigil of Gethsemane; that the human nature and the animal nature within him should have found a voice, regardless of reason and of divine decisions, follows from the assumed reality of his human nature. It is impossible for inspired language to say everything at once, or for strong feeling to feel everything equally. At best, after venting one emotion we may recall another, and so qualify the issue; but the inspiration, if it is genuine, must remain in each case specific and vital. Harmony can reign in the soul only over a heap of ruins. Human nature, assumed in order to be sacrificed and to be transformed, then utters its last cry at the foot of the altar. It cannot understand the High Priest's purpose.

It sees the axe brandished. and, accustomed as it is to the yoke. it bends the neck.

Variations on the same theme appear in the seven words uttered by Christ upon the cross. All the seven are important in considering the idea of him transmitted by the Evangelists. One of these reported words may have been a memory. another an inspiration and a third an intentional symbol: they all form integral parts of the drama of the Passion, as Christian tradition has conceived it. and therefore contribute equally to that idea of Christ which is my theme. None of these words express the exact sentiment of the prayer in the Garden. The element of submission, there so prominent, does not reappear. The phrases that represent human impulse are uttered frankly, spontaneously, without qualifications or second thoughts: *I thirst*, or *My God, my God, why hast thou forsaken me?* The first of these is simplicity itself, the abeyance of all but an immediate sensation that may prevail for a moment in the midst of the greatest plights. The second is no less direct, no less impulsive, but engages the whole soul: a cry of despair, as if the life of the body, in spite of all its sufferings or on account of them, had remained blindly attached to its continuance, to the chance of some recovery or some escape. Why have I been created, cries the animal will, only to be tortured, only to be crushed? In the Garden, this primary will to live and to conquer had masked itself in the vague phrase, *if it be possible*. Now, fully realising how possible, how easy, victory would have been, the same will shuts out all contrary reasons, and sees nothing but defeat and darkness. It is human, it is honest, it is noble: but the other currents in the soul, deflected for a moment, are bound presently to flow in, and raise the level to the normal fulness and apparent calm. The calm, in this life, can never be real, if we look beneath the surface; because the potentialities of life are many, and most of them in any case have been suppressed. There is therefore nothing scandalous in this cry: *Why hast thou forsaken me?* Even the son of God has reason to utter it. He is the truer man for doing so, when the

condemned hope was noble, and the supervening contrary interests have sunk out of sight. When awareness of them becomes again possible, the crisis will be past. The histrionic passion that had carried the spirit for a moment into that dream will give place to a less concentrated and wider consciousness.

All this may be said, taking prayer merely as the initial cry of human nature, impossible to suppress in the stress of misfortune; but the same words or gestures may represent much more than an elementary vital force. Ultimate hopes and lifelong convictions may be at stake, and that cry may be the voice of the whole soul in the dark night of the spirit. *I thirst* may be taken symbolically as well as literally; and God may have abandoned us because perhaps he does not exist. The black void may be swallowing up our life and our prayer in infinite derision.

That the Passion of Christ included such a moral crisis seems to be indicated by these words, repeated by two of the Evangelists in the original: *Eli, Eli, lama sabachthani*. It seems also to have extended to the disciples that dispersed and abandoned him on his arrest. The confidence that he was the Messiah had been lost: all had been a delusion. Yet at the time when the Gospels were written that confidence had been recovered and, justified by a theory, become the fundamental dogma of Christianity. Yet those words, drawn from Scripture, were still assigned to the dying Christ, as if they had been his last words. In the devout idea of Christ they seemed, then, not incompatible with his divinity. Are they so really, or was this only an unsolved contradiction that existed between the various traditions, which in their eager faith and neglect of criticism the Evangelists enshrined in their Gospels?

This question becomes the more interesting the more we disregard the historical value of these narratives and study them, as I do here, only for their moral and dramatic inspiration. If in a myth, we were describing God become man, should we include the Dark Night of the soul among his experiences? I think we should, and a few words may suffice to indicate the reason.

On the road to Emmaus, the risen Christ, unrecognized, explains to two of his disciples that, as the Scriptures had foretold, it behooved the Me-siah to suffer a cruel death, and to be rejected by the Jews. His kingdom, as he says elsewhere, was not of this world. Now this was a hard lesson to learn, not only for other Jews but for the man, himself a Jew, in whom the Son of God was hidden. And it would be a mere evasion of that lesson to suggest that the human nature in Christ had been so enlightened and exalted by its union with his divine nature as not to retain any weakness, or rather any strength, for the exercise of human virtues. On the contrary: the fact that by alliance with divinity *some* human impulses may have been transmuted from the beginning—because his body, like Adam's, was perfectly subject to his soul—only made the remaining human impulses in him the more imperative. A stupid devil, at the beginning, had tempted him with the satisfactions of appetite, vanity, and power—not at all passions capable of seducing him; but now, at the end, it was faith, hope, and love that were threatening to betray him: and how could he endure to give them up? *My God, my God, why hast thou forsaken me?* It was his love of human souls, his hope of justice, his faith in the triumph of the truth that had played him false. How could the *good* have so misled him?

This form of despair is more high-minded, more heroic, than merely physical anguish, yet it is not less human. The divine nature in Christ was just as much obscured by the one as by the other. And the obscuration had the same cause: a cloud of human troubles darkening the sky, a black cloud, but passing. When the violent pressure of disappointment was relaxed, even if it were only death that relaxed it, the clear sky of divine illumination would reappear. God had forsaken him, so that he might forsake himself. He had been denied the good, to teach him to see good in everything. God had crushed him and reduced him to nothing, in order that up that path, *Nothing, nothing, nothing*, he might climb to spiritual dominion over all realities.

It is still human nature that speaks in two of the other words uttered on the cross: *Father, forgive them, for they know not what they do*, and, *Father, into thy hands I commend my spirit*. The invocation *Father*, made so tenderly, shows of itself that the human soul here retains full consciousness of its adoption, is sitting familiarly at the feet of God, if not beside him upon his throne, sees things from God's point of view, and can make petitions that are sure to be granted. He is aware of his mission and in the midst of his sufferings renews his charity, understands the circumstances of his brutal executioners, forgets his wrongs, and forgives. He had not so constantly preached forgiveness without inwardly feeling the justice of it, in spite of his own innocence, and now he begs this justice for them, in spite of their wickedness. Such prayers are petitions only in form. Does not God care for his creatures as much as we do? Does he not understand them better? Yet our childlike babble has its weight, as expressing our own disposition, and in that capacity counts in the budget of the moral world. And in this case, forgiveness breathed by the victim surely has a greater potency than merciful scruples could have in the judge: especially when we consider that, beneath the play of his adopted humanity, the will of Christ and that of his Father are absolutely one.

A sense of this latent oneness begins to appear in the words: *Father, into thy hands I commend my spirit*. This spirit is the human soul in Christ, now exhausted, feeling the ebb of its life, during a moment's pause, perhaps not the last pause, in its sufferings. There is gradual relief, a diminution of pressure, as it were the on-coming of peace and of sleep. Not at all the sleep of death; rather the sleep of a child. The bosom of God is not Abraham's bosom, not limbo, but the very centre of light and life, calm only on account of its equilibrium and infinite security. There an unexampled destiny awaits the human soul, after an obscure youth, an unavailing mission, and a horrible martyrdom. It would seem that the voice commending this soul to God is not the voice of that soul itself, forsaken in its mission, but that of the divine

Christ in his eternity. He is delivering that human soul which he had assumed to his Father, by whose will he had assumed it. Its work was done: now what should be its reward? God had become man on earth: should not that man become God in heaven?

Yes, but not in the sense of losing his humanity, either in body or in soul. These could be committed to the Father with all confidence that they would be preserved and renewed. The risen Christ would sit upon the throne, alone visible to the eye of the saints, who only by their intelligence and intuition would know that he was identical with the son of God, and that God dwelt in him. Thus the Jewish expectation of the Messiah ruling over a purified universe would be literally fulfilled in heaven.

It is in perfect assurance of this identity, uttering no prayers but himself commanding the future, that Christ speaks the three remaining words from the cross: *To-day shalt thou be with me in Paradise, Woman, behold thy son, Behold thy mother, and It is finished.* They are testamentary words. He is no longer living his life in time but considering it transcendently; disposing, with creative authority, what its relations shall be in eternity. It was by no means necessary for him to die or to ascend into heaven in order to exercise these sovereign rights. He did not and could not always exercise them while still a wayfarer in this world; but he always possessed them virtually. There is no contradiction between these divine prerogatives, recalled at certain times, and Christ's habitual mode of speech and behaviour as a man. On the cross, he manifests both natures boldly, in sharp alternation, as is natural in supreme moments. Everything is uttered together, when he cries out at last with a loud voice.

The episode of the repentant thief is no doubt symbolical, and useful to encourage hardened sinners to become saints. It is in the nature of religious homilies to treat historical facts as moral symbols, and moral symbols as historical facts. That does not concern or trouble me; the point is that this incident exhibits the idea of Christ to perfection. The thief does everything that appeals to

Christ's heart. First, he suffers, and suffers precisely what, materially, Christ is suffering at that moment. Then, he is humble and accepts his sentence as just. Finally, he believes in Christ precisely when belief in him was most difficult, when his claims seem to be disproved; and he prays to Jesus: *Lord, remember me when thou comest into thy kingdom*. And then the answer comes, complete and immediate: *To-day thou shalt be with me in Paradise*. This is more than a prophecy, it is a decree; the Son of God is speaking, but not impersonally from a cloud, as his Father is wont to speak. The human soul of Christ has become the instrument for that exercise of divine prerogatives. And the human soul is no lifeless or passive instrument. It supplies the language, the tone, the occasion for the act performed; Christ speaks in his human person, moved by human feelings, yet armed with divine powers; and this can happen without any conflict or sense of duality in his will, because now, in his human soul, the part dominant is precisely the part always secretly flooded with divine light and knowledge. In the midst of the passions the passions can be eluded, and the divine intellect can see all those red and golden atoms of passion shining in an eternal mosaic.

Out of the same background of peace, and more pensively, without any incident to call it forth, comes the word to his mother and to the beloved disciple: *Woman, behold thy son*, and *Behold thy mother*. Taken for an actual event, this shows an unusual tenderness in Christ towards his domestic circle. Ordinarily, he emphasises the greater claims of the world, of his mission, and of obedience to the spirit: here he offers his mother another son, and his young friend another guide, as if he were sorry to desert them. Could he have been sorry? The end of anything is always sad, even if timely and followed by something better. At the close of life, early memories return and old affections. We wish to do what is possible to render the issue beautiful and consoling. But in this case the rationalist critics are the first to tell us that everything is symbolic. Mary signifies the Jewish tradition; John, the

Gentiles to be converted: the latter must accept the old dispensation as a foundation, and the Church must adopt the pagan world for its field of labour. Both the literal and the symbolic readings are in the Johannine spirit. Loving-kindness among men: Christ as a private oracle and guide over individuals: the Virgin Mary and the beloved disciple beginning to appear, discreetly but pregnantly, in important places. So much by way of amplifying the chronicle and rendering it more devotional; and then, in the ecclesiastical direction, a firm reassertion, against the mystics, of the Jewish dispensation for the past, with the heart open to Greek inspiration for the future.

In *John*, where the bold and troubled side of Christ's humanity is suppressed, the last word from the cross is: *It is finished*, or better, *It is consummated*, *consummatum est*, τετέλεσται. For the word τέλος, end, is certainly used here not in the material sense of something done with and past, but in the moral sense of something perfected and accomplished. Christ in this Gospel is everywhere the master of his own fate. Even when he cries, *I thirst*, he does so not because he is thirsty or cannot endure his thirst in silence, but in order *that the scripture might be fulfilled*. *It is consummated* is surely to be understood in the same transcendental sense: the appointed course has been run, the sacrifice made, it is time to awake from the agony of this voluntary dream. This action will not be drowned and merged in the flood of time; it is stamped distinct in eternity. The divine spirit gives the blessed signal; the human soul obediently hears it, and the head drops upon the breast. We are not told of Christ's crying out with a loud voice: that is already well known or else not welcome in this picture; it might disturb our assurance that this brutal tragedy was in reality a ritual sacrifice, in which the victim was also the high priest.

This same superior vision, mingled, however, with a quite human valedictory sadness, presides over the prayers and injunctions that Christ pronounces after the Last Supper. The tone is solemn and oracular; there is much repetition. These themes are so important

spiritually that we understand the propriety of developing them; yet the discourses seem rather those of the risen Christ, bidding his disciples farewell before his final ascension. The mixture of fervour with mystical calm seems already heavenly; a veil of incense and tears covers, to earthly eyes, the meaning of the words. Yet we must endeavour to understand them, because this is Christ's spiritual testament. As in *Matthew* he leaves a political legacy to the Christian community, bidding his disciples go and baptise all nations, and saying to one of them, *Thou art Peter, and upon this rock I will build my church, and the gates of hell shall not prevail against it*; so in *John* he leaves a spiritual legacy to each inwardly converted soul in these last admonitions and prayers. What is it that they actually convey?

In the first place, we may observe one important limitation in Christ's prayer. *I pray not for the world, but for them which thou hast given me*. We are told in many places that Christ was sent to save the world, and we see his charity especially going out to outcasts and to sinners: but it is only because they have redeemable souls. As to the world at large, *the prince of this world is already judged*. In other words, Christ is not come to save the world, as the world would wish, in its own interests; he is come to save his own, whom the Father has given him out of the world. They will live in the world without being of the world, because the world cannot receive the spirit of truth. This spirit of truth he has already imparted to them in some measure; and he will not leave them comfortless, but will send the Holy Ghost, to impart it to them more fully. And what does this spirit of truth bring to those who receive it?

It brings union with God. *I come to thee, Holy Father, that they may be one, as we are one. As the branch cannot bear fruit of itself, except it abide in the vine, no more can ye, except ye abide in me. As the Father hath loved me, so have I loved you; continue ye in my love. This is my commandment, That ye love one another, as I have loved you . . . He that hath my commandments,*

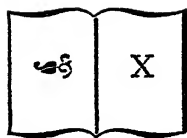
and keepeth them, he it is that loveth me, and he that loveth me shall be loved of my Father . . . and we will come unto him and make our abode with him.

Union with God is something mysterious and the language used about it must be taken loosely, else we come at once upon flat contradictions. Here, for instance, Christ says: *I and the Father are one, He that hath seen me hath seen the Father*; but he also says, *The Father is greater than I, I came forth from the Father and am come into the world; again I leave the world, and go to the Father*. And he prays to the Father, who has given him all power, as if that power still flowed from a removed source, with which, by that influx, he is made one. I think that without going beyond these texts we may gather two things: that union or oneness is not meant to be identity, and that it has degrees. For the degree of oneness between Christ and his Father is surely much greater than that possible between them and merely human souls; and if there be identity in the quality of this possible union between spirits, there are degrees in the extent, so to speak, to which that union pervades those spirits. We may be one in some measure and in some respect: we remain several in our existence, status, and persons. The great bond of union is love; and love itself implies the keenest recognition of otherness in the person loved, with various feelings of attraction, compassion, admiration, and concern about someone from whom fate might part us. The duality makes all the tension, the wonder, and the unhappiness of love, upon which rapture may supervene when all barriers break down. Then there may be a *feeling* of absolute union, such as mystics describe; but even this feeling implies that two persons have it; otherwise there would be no miracle. That A is A creates no emotion; what is rapturous is that A and B should become one.

There is also a sort of union in sacrifice, when a soul voluntarily surrenders and abolishes its being for the sake of a good not to be enjoyed by that soul itself. Such a soul may be said to transfer its egoism to the ensuing object or life. It survives in another, but

only by ceasing to be the soul that it was. Nature is not averse to these fertile sacrifices; they are sometimes made instinctively and sometimes heroically, with a suicidal zeal. And although the Pauline theology with its theory of the atonement sees such a sacrifice in the death of Jesus, the Gospels present it to us as an act of obedience rather than of enthusiasm on his part. By his mute sufferings he pays the price exacted; he does not rush self-forgetfully into danger for the sake of a better world in which he will play no part.

The direction in which the prayers of Christ in the Gospels open a long vista is that of the inner dialogue of the spirit with itself. He is God in man: banished in a certain sense from himself yet profoundly aware of his concealed divinity. All its prerogatives, if he wills, are at his command; but he has willed not to will them during this earthly episode, except in a limited measure in special cases. Therefore this temporary life is lived within him in earnest, though not without a sense of the really eternal status and infinite scope of the spirit that enacts it. In these circumstances the dialogue between God and man goes on in his mind: and it is a profoundly human dialogue. To convince ourselves of this, we need but remember that God lives in the eternal. All things are present to him always: all his dialogues are, as it were, already written out in a book, but in a book that he is eternally reading, as if for the first time. Everything for him remains equally fresh and yet there are no novelties. Therefore in Christ, as God, his human life and all his human perceptions and wishes are perpetually present in idea. In him as man, the experiences corresponding follow one another, connected only by evanescent pictures in expectation and memory and supported by an instinctive trust. How inevitable and how warm, in such a mind, must be the inner dialogue between man and God: on the one side a perpetual prayer, on the other an unfailing illumination and support! That all goes on within one person is no paradox. In reality, it could never go on otherwise.



THE PASSION

The Passion of Christ, as it passed through his mind, is expressed for us by the Evangelists in his prayers; it is expressed dumbly also in his demeanour. For the most part this demeanour is passive: he has consented to endure whatsoever was appointed for him to endure. His accusers, his judges, the public and the executioners are puppets in God's hands. Above their heads and behind their actions he sees the overruling will of his Father, which is his own deliberate and primitive will. These instruments are hardly worth attention in their various degrees of violence or malice. He seldom deigns to answer their questions; and if he does, it is only to reassert his divine authority and prophesy his second coming in the clouds.

There are, however, certain episodes, antecedents, or asides provoked on special occasions, in which Christ's spontaneous feelings appear. So in regard to the alabaster box of very precious ointment poured on his head at the house of Simon the Leper. In this scene, what freedom of spirit, what range of thought and judgment, what tenderness in despair! The woman is unmistakably Mary Magdalene, the sister of Martha, whose brother at Bethany Jesus had just raised from the dead. He knows that she will soon reappear by his cross and at his sepulchre. There is, however, some confusion in the reports. Never mind whether there were two or three occasions and two or three women, or only

one. In any case the shy disciples and hypocritical guests, who all know the law and the prophets, dare not say how shocked they are at such a scene; but murmurs arise about the waste of money that might have been given to the poor. Christ says: *Ye have the poor always with you: but me ye have not always. For in that she hath poured this ointment on my body she did it for my burial.* And this act, so audacious, passionate and decorative, would be told in the whole world for a memorial of her. He was already living his coming Passion, his death, and the fate of his image in the afterworld.

This episode was a foreword to the Passion and is introduced, as it were, by chance; but Christ himself expressly introduces a most unexpected action to which I have already called the reader's attention. When all had taken their places for the Last Supper, he rose, *laid aside his garments, and took a towel and girded himself. After that, he poureth water into a basin and began to wash the disciples' feet, and to wipe them with the towel wherewith he was girded. . . . So after he had washed their feet and had taken his garments and was set down again, he said unto them: Know ye what I have done to you? . . . I have given you an example, that ye should do as I have done to you.* And there was more than an example of humility and service; there was a symbol of purification. When Peter protested, Jesus had said: *If I wash thee not, thou hast no part in me.* And Peter, understanding, had replied, *Lord, not my feet only, but also my hands and my head.* Here the lesson of humility had been already learned. For the fruit of humility is reconciliation with the truth.

Another original, even more mysterious, action was about to follow: the institution of the Eucharist. This too is a symbol: not merely that the bread represents Christ's body and the wine his blood, but that the eating and drinking represent, and ought to induce, participation in his divinity. Here recurs a well-known most ancient intuition of the religious mind: an animal, the emblem and secret seat of a god, in being solemnly sacrificed, divided,

and eaten, transmits the god's strength or his blessing to the devout worshipper. Here is at once a tragedy and a feast; the god incarnate in his chosen animal dies, yet is immortal in his proper function and essence. This apparent tragedy or even cannibalism renews the life of the spirit in man, and renders him the special seat and image of his divine patron.

Such is the core and primitive meaning of these embodiments of the divinity and this communion with it; but in the Christian mystery there is also another intention. The victim sacrificed was a sin-offering; and participation in his body and blood (blood being the seat of life) meant also liberation from the guilt which that sacrifice might cancel. For the victim, though spotless in itself, had been *devoted* and made a scapegoat. The sins of others had been magically piled on its head by an incantation: and in paying the price of death in its innocence, that victim had given a new lease of freedom and life to the guilty.

If we would recover the secret of this eucharistic mystery, we need to reawaken in ourselves that ancient sense of divine influences, emanations, and interfusions of spirit; so that, as Christ says so often in *John*, we may feel God abiding in us, and ourselves in God. Christ wishes to assimilate our lives to his. He is one with his Father, by a perpetual generation that establishes a distinction of characters without permitting any conflict of will; for when you are completely derivative you are at once entirely different from your source and necessarily in harmony with it. Why shouldn't we, who are also completely derivative, be perfectly obedient and perfectly happy? But for us that happy issue is naturally impossible, since we depend on a variety of independent forces and accidents, so that our individuality is buffeted and thwarted at every turn by its circumstances and supports. We have not, like the Son of God, a single and changeless parent. Therefore this ideal of perfect unity within ourselves and with our source, while deeply appealing and realised at moments in certain respects, is devastating to our complex and vacillating interests. We must first unify

ourselves, which is in itself a great mutilation; and then we must cling only to the abstracted power that supports this heroically integrated self, ignoring all the other forces that control our fortunes. We may thus save our souls, or the part of them that we have chosen to cultivate; but it will be at the cost of dire conflicts with the world and with everything that we have condemned in ourselves. This is the cross that we must take up if we would follow Christ. This is his flesh and his blood, that we must eat and drink if we are to have any part in his resurrection.

How severe this sacrifice was to the Son of Man himself, we have seen in his prayer in the Garden. He is facing death and the surrender of all his human hopes. In his demeanour there, when his mind reverts to the incidents of the moment, we see the fruits of resignation. *What*, he cries to his drowsy disciples, *could ye not watch with me one hour? . . . The spirit indeed is willing, but the flesh is weak.* And to Judas, when he appears with the band brought to arrest him, *Friend, wherefore art thou come? . . . betrayest thou the Son of Man with a kiss?* There is no hope in his mind, no anger, only a slightly sarcastic sadness. Before leaving Jerusalem, after the Last Supper, he had said: *When I sent you without purse, and scrip, and shoes, lacked ye anything? . . . But now, he that hath a purse, let him take it, and likewise his scrip; and he that hath no sword, let him sell his garment, and buy one.* And when his disciples, taking his words literally, say they have two swords, he replies: *It is enough.* Later, when Peter actually uses one of them, secret thoughts have to pass into explicit maxims: *Put up thy sword . . . All they that take the sword shall perish with the sword.* And he touches the man's ear that had been cut, and heals it. The will of the Father must be fulfilled, and the Scriptures. The disciples disperse, and Christ is bound and carried before his judges.

The same pensive prophetic mood, that looks abroad over the melancholy spectacle of life and death, as to the vast background of his acute suffering, appears in his words to the women on the

way to Calvary: *Daughters of Jerusalem, weep not for me, but weep for yourselves and for your children. For, behold, the days are coming in the which they shall say, Blessed are the barren, and the wombs that never bare, and the paps that never gave suck. Then shall they begin to say to the mountains, Fall upon us; and to the hills, Cover us. For if they do these things in a green tree, what shall be done in the dry?*

These utterances, together with the seven words from the cross already considered, exhaust the tradition handed down to us concerning the spirit in which Christ suffered. They are only sparks from the flame that would certainly have burned within him, and we are left to our own inadequate inspiration to discover what most concerns us; I mean that secret spirit of victory through sacrifice which is precisely what might be reproduced in some measure in our misguided lives.

The mind of the Church (which includes that of the Evangelists) could attribute to Christ during his Passion only such motives and thoughts as corresponded to the full truth regarding that Passion. But that full truth was exceedingly complex, and popular tradition could only hand down scattered sayings and partial doctrines that expressed divers sides of it, until thorough saturation in the faith should provoke a fresh intuition and prompt the requisite synthesis. Not one of those sayings must be forgotten, not one of those doctrines denied, but each must be interpreted in the light of all the others. It is impossible to say everything at once. It is impossible to think of everything at any time with an equal clearness and force; yet the elements that are in abeyance do not cease to make their presence felt and to ballast, as it were, the ship that rises and falls with the waves.

What, then, is it that the inspiration of the Church has declared, after centuries of meditation, to be the *full burden* of Christ's Passion, the radical and ultimate purpose of his incarnation and of his death on the cross? The Gospels indeed tell us that it was the redemption of the world, and that the Father so loved the world

that he gave his only begotten Son, that as many as believed in him might have eternal life. But we are left to wonder how love of the world could lead the Creator to meditate the destruction of it, as by another Deluge, and to substitute for it an eternal life in quite another world, to be granted to comparatively few souls, in whom he would inspire faith in his Son. Nor do we gather from the Gospels how the sacrifice of the Son could be requisite or appropriate for the salvation and eternal life of the believer. The need of that sacrifice is indeed asserted; Christ himself in instituting the Eucharist says that *this is my blood of the new testament, which is shed for many for the remission of sins*. The Passion of Christ is therefore to be understood as a ritual sacrifice; and in other parts of the New Testament we find this idea developed in two parallel but religiously different forms: the theory of the scapegoat and the image of the Lamb.

The theory of the scapegoat, developed by Saint Paul, has rather unsavoury antecedents. Saint Paul is full of the spirit of Christ when he looks out upon the world, but of the person of Christ he has no intuition.

The contrary is eminently true of Saint John; and it was most appropriate that the whole prophetic and mystical tradition of the early Church should have been formed under his auspices and called after his name. This Johannine tradition retained the moral and political quality of Hebrew prophecy (as the Apocalypse shows) in regard to earthly destinies and the revolutions to come; and it accepted the Pauline doctrine of redemption and vicarious atonement; but at the same time it infused into all this legalistic and eschatological system, and superimposed upon it, an inward spiritual redemption. The scapegoat became the Lamb of God.

Now it is surely as the Lamb of God, and not as a scapegoat, that Christ in his Passion would have conceived himself. The scapegoat was a passive victim, not spotless and sacrificed upon the altar: curses were cast upon it without its knowledge or will; and the crimes it was to expiate were named, numbered and cal-

ulated officially. But Christ never doled out forgiveness by weight and measure, nor balanced so many graces for so many prayers or so many drops of blood. He was the Lamb of God, sacrificed willingly. He was God himself become man in order to endure the trials which he imposed, and in order to become the pattern and model of all endurance; also of such transformation of the human soul through suffering and love as might truly and intrinsically redeem it.

The Lamb, after the prophetic figure of the paschal lamb, was chosen for its spotlessness and innocence; yet this Lamb of the apocalypse is not weak. Although he appears "as one slain," he is the Lord of lords and the King of kings, with a hundred and forty-four thousand followers as pure and as miraculously powerful as himself. They are such as "were not defiled with women, for they are virgins," and they are destined to overcome the world.

But for them this is not to be a thundering material victory. They have been redeemed from the world of battles; they were never entangled in their own sins or in the Law. They sing a new song, "and no man could learn that song but the hundred and forty and four thousand which were redeemed from the earth." For them "the mystery of God is finished" and "there shall be no more."

This whole spectacle, then, not only the vision of Patmos but the entire creation and history of time, is "the mystery of God," and only when "it is finished" and the truth of it shines in eternity can the secret of it be manifest. This very phrase, "it is finished," had been uttered by Christ on the Cross. There the mystery had been solved, and it is there, perhaps, that we may gather the clearest hints of what the secret may be. One episode, already considered, lends itself particularly to interpretation, when Christ sees his mother and his beloved disciple providentially standing before him, and says to them respectively: *Behold thy son, Behold thy mother*. Orthodox commentators admit that three or four interpretations of Biblical texts may be equally valid, and need not ex-

clude one another; and here especially, in a scene so characteristic of *John*, what is recorded as a fact and by believers must be accepted as a fact, is surely a symbol also, and who knows in how many senses, rising to who knows what angelical removes? Could we divine them all, we should understand why Christ's Passion was necessary, and how, by undergoing and transcending it, he overcame the world.

In the first place we may observe that this episode has the same relations within the Gospel narrative as has the Transfiguration. It is a detached vision, not connected with the preceding or succeeding events, but intervening like a moment of rapt meditation and glimpse into eternity. The scene and the mystery, given together, must be felt together. The bare cross, even without a figure, has remained the well-understood emblem of the whole Christian faith: and so, in many a great church, the vision of Christ crucified, between his mother and his beloved disciple, has been raised high in air over the altar screen as the sufficient symbol for all Christian devotion. Christ, after his mission was begun, had been markedly detached from his mother and brethren. But now, at his last hour, his heart reverts to its first attachment. He sees his mother at the foot of his cross. Was she really there? And had his favourite disciple, who the night before had abandoned him like all the others, somehow found his way back? What does it matter? In any case, he sees them there. His pilgrimage is completed: he has nothing more to suffer. The whole past, and the whole future, begin to come forward, to recover their intrinsic presentness, and to loosen him from the horrid fetters of the casual now. In eternity how should he be less faithful to his earthly mother than to his heavenly Father? Was it not the Father who gave him that mother to bring him into this world and define the place, time, and circumstances of his incarnation? She is the mother of his flesh, of his humility, of his sorrows; and there is something bitter as well as sweet in being bound to her: but he recognises the bond and its necessity, not only for him but for all life. As he has taught all men

to call his Father "Father," so he will teach all men to call his mother "Mother": that they may learn that nature can be full of grace, and that the flesh can be a parent of the spirit.

In this visionary scene Calvary is transported from the realm of urgent agony and irrelevant accidents into a spiritual emblem; and these figures become as it were a human Trinity, God dwelling in three earthly persons in different degrees, all three replete with a genuine humanity. In Christ, God dwells absolutely, his person being essentially divine; but he has entered into a human body, accepting the life and death proper to that body. This is a supernatural and inimitable union; yet we have seen how it overflows in the miracles and in the words of Christ, all instinct with compassion for the plight of the spirit in man, and with zeal for its deliverance. In Mary there is only human nature, but sinless, flower-like and passive, absolutely submissive from the beginning to the will of God, and predestined to be drawn into the drama of the redemption, with all its anxieties and vicissitudes, by special dispensations: first by being chosen for the incomparable honour of becoming the mother of the incarnate God, and then by inevitably participating in his unspoken sorrows and public martyrdom. Her motherhood had humanised her purity, and her human tenderness had become universal in unison with her son's mission. Still, though merely human, she remains exceptional, a celestial soul untouched by the sin of Adam, in whose body God had dwelt bodily, and whose spirit was miraculously overshadowed by his grace.

More normal, nearer to our common lot, was the case of the beloved disciple. He was a young fisherman, ardent but chaste, ambitious, a "son of thunder," not at first knowing the spirit that he was of, but ready to drink of the cup that Christ would drink of. Tradition has it that he was actually martyred, but rescued miraculously from the cauldron of boiling oil into which he had been cast. At any rate, the New Testament represents him as living to extreme old age, and pouring forth the spirit that he was of, now

fully recognised by him, in his Apocalypse, Gospel, and Epistles. God is in him in the natural form of inspiration. He remembers vividly the circumstances of Christ's life, and appreciates above all the mystery of his divinity, the depth of his love, the magic of his presence. The whole has become visionary, enchanted, hieratic, like this very scene, this human Trinity in Calvary, in which he stands for all the souls that Jesus has loved.

Why is it the cross that in this vision unites three so different persons? Why, being all three innocent, should they come to drink of the same cup, Christ voluntarily, Mary submissively, and John enthusiastically? Might not the Son of God have remained in his heaven, and showered from there whatever mercies and graces he wished to bestow on the world? Then Mary might have finished her life in the humble solitude and peace which her soul had chosen, and John need never have deserted his father's nets or his brothers' boats by the Sea of Galilee. It was all done, we are told, in order to save the world. But in what sense? It was not by the cross that the Jews or the other nations wished to be saved, nor has the cross saved them. Their lives and their wars are what they always were; and as to their souls, according to the Gospels, now that salvation by the cross has been offered to them, they are doomed to a much deeper damnation than if they had been left in their heathen ignorance. And even when the world is nominally or officially converted, it remains in the mass no less worldly and as little regenerate as it was before; and the very preachers of the cross become a part of it, more contaminated with worldliness than the world was ever leavened with sanctity.

The salvation worked by the cross is worked by it essentially, intrinsically, spiritually, not by accident or legal artifice or in the interests of the world itself. It is salvation of the spirit out of the world, not by a change in the world (though some change will incidentally occur in it) but by a change of allegiance in the heart, so that the interests of the world will count for less and less in the heart, and the interests of the spirit for more and more.

In the synoptic Gospels this spiritual meaning of the redemption remains in the background, as it naturally does in the miracles worked by Christ during his mission: for it is a humane characteristic of Christianity that it begins with works of corporal mercy and then, if possible, proceeds towards a spiritual regeneration. And this recognition of the body and its necessities, and even of its fundamental place in the life of the spirit, is not abolished even in heaven. Christ wept over Jerusalem, wept, no doubt, at the impossibility of his earthly kingdom: yet he was sure of material resurrection and of a material victory at the last day; and orthodox Christianity has always believed in another life in another world, *in vitam venturi saeculi*, as well as in a metanoia of the spirit. At the same time, save for this spiritual regeneration, that other world and that future life would be nothing but a new trial, a different slavery, and a fresh disappointment: a second redemption would be required.

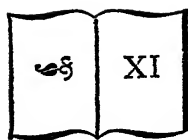
That victory of the Lamb in the Apocalypse over the Beast and over Babylon and even over time itself could therefore be only a spiritual victory. It lies in the very nature of time, as well as of Babylon and of the Beast, that they should perish continually. There is no escape from mutation, which so deeply wounds the spirit in its affections, except by accepting mutation, while transferring its treasures to the realm of truth, where mutation is impossible. Christ on the cross is in the act of passing back in his own person from the distress of mortal life to his native heaven. In no other soul could so intense and so complete a sense have existed of that transition. At the height of his agony he must have begun to hear that new song which the spirit sings in the Apocalypse. This Lamb of God could not resist the knife, and made no effort to do so; for he knew that he triumphed by shedding his blood, and lived by having consented to die. In such supreme moments the mind and heart turn from the pursuit and cares of life to the understanding of it, from personal preoccupations to the intuition of truth, with a purified joy in the beauty of that truth. This is no passage from one world to another

or from this life to the next; it is the infusion of the Creator's vision into the created mind. Such is the only possible union of man with God, in which God remains God and man remains man.

This transformation the theologians call supernatural and attribute it to grace obtained by Christ's sacrifice: such is the language of ancient ritual. But in itself the transformation is neither unnatural nor inhuman. The ideal of every child-like mind and will is to be omnipotent. The spark of divinity lives always within us. Therefore it was always easy for fable to conceive the gods in human form, visiting the earth and becoming masters in some human art or adventure. Yet the humanity of these gods was only a mask or a deception: in Christ it was a dire reality. It was not the semblance of man that he had assumed but his flesh and blood, his banishment and his sorrows. And in assuming human nature, instead of mocking it he had sanctified it; and he will carry it back with him to heaven. It will not embarrass him there, as his divinity sometimes embarrassed him on earth. There is no place where spirit arises more spontaneously than in the heart of man, or shines more becomingly than in his face. For spirit is a light that burns, and requires the flesh for its fuel: yet it cannot burn clearly until the greater part of that fuel has been turned into living flame. The sacrifice and the grace that flows from it are thus two sides of the same thing, of the assimilation of man to the idea of Christ in his Passion.

In Greek mythology there had been some hint of a god that would not merely impose a supreme sacrifice on a human hero, such as Prometheus, but should himself suffer for man's good. Demeter, bereft of her own child, appears as a wise stranger in a king's palace, and nurses the infant prince paradoxically, secretly laying him at night on the burning embers, in order to render him immortal. Her action is detected and misunderstood, and she is being driven away with imprecations when in the act of vanishing she is transfigured from a mournful wayfarer into a shining goddess. Dionysus also is a secret benefactor, coming to rouse men's souls

from lethargy and commonness; but he does so wildly, upsetting well-ordered society, and driving the rout of his female followers into the wilderness to commit a ritual murder in their madness. In Christ there is no intoxication; his inspiration is not madness but charity. Nor is it some private sorrow of his own, like Demeter's, that teaches him compassion for the world. His compassion for the world was itself his divine sorrow, and had prompted him to become man. He did not thereby cease to be God or to assert the absolute prerogatives of the godhead; yet he enabled himself to suffer as his creatures inevitably suffered. He showed them how love can render suffering voluntary, and how obedience can disinfect suffering of all rebellion and dissolve it into ineffable peace.



THE RESURRECTION

What little the Gospels tell us concerning the risen Christ is of the greatest importance to our theme, for it indicates the character that was attributed to Christ when he was fully revealed and appeared in his double perfection. This is also the character that every Christian would aspire to develop in himself, so that it manifests the goal of Christian morals and the life to be hoped for by the saints in heaven.

These scanty reports do credit to the good faith of the Evangelists, each of whom gathers such accounts as he happened to hear; accounts which differ in detail, as the testimony to recent obscure and exciting events is bound to differ, but on the whole tell the same story. Christ, they report, was buried in a rock-cut tomb in a garden, very near the place of the crucifixion; and on the morning of the first day of the week following, pious women, who came to mourn at that place, found the stone rolled away from the entrance and the tomb empty. Informed of this, Peter and John ran to the spot, and saw that such was indeed the fact, observing in particular that the winding sheet was lying in the grave, while the napkin that had been wrapped about Christ's head lay apart by itself. These are just such details as a narrator, perplexed about the main issue, retains and loves to repeat, to prove the reality of his observations. We are also told that one or two angels in white sat or stood by the tomb, and spoke, saying, *Fear not. He is arisen. He is not here.*

Why seek ye the living among the dead? He goeth before you into Galilee. There shall ye see him.

But it was not necessary to go so far or to wait so long. Mary Magdalene had been one of the first visitors at the tomb; and when she turned in distress, because the body had been taken away, she saw in the morning twilight a figure she thought the gardener. *Sir*, she said, *if thou have borne him hence, tell me where thou hast laid him, and I will take him away.* Jesus saith unto her, *Mary.* She turned herself and saith unto him, *Rabboni*, which is to say, *Master.* Jesus saith unto her, *Touch me not, for I am not yet ascended to my Father; but go to my brethren and say unto them, I ascend unto my Father and your Father; and to my God and your God.*

Other apparitions to individuals are mentioned, but this to Mary Magdalene is the most life-like and the most important. Christ seems to have just come out of the grave, as if he were still haunting the spot and not quite free as yet from contact with the earth. *Touch me not*, he says, as if the ritual uncleanness of a corpse still clung to him. And he repeats, and wishes to have repeated to his disciples, that he is indeed ascending to his Father. These seem the words of a human soul still in travail, irrationally subject to accidents of mood and occasion. He is going to appear presently to his disciples in person, and to give them full counsels and directions. Why send them messages through Mary, and such merely prayerful messages? Why appear to Mary Magdalene at all? Because she was here seeking him? Because she loves him? No doubt: yet these are earthly and human reasons. His Resurrection has not severed the bonds of his soul with place and time. For the moment, as if under the impression of a terrible catastrophe not yet shaken off, they seem particularly to oppress him. He says nothing to Mary about herself. He longs to ascend to heaven.

There follow at once, and then at intervals, various public or official apparitions that are related with a double purpose: first to assure the disciples of Christ's Resurrection, and second, to transmit his earthly mission to them and bid them farewell. It is notable in

these instructions that little or nothing is said of his second coming, which had often been announced as almost immediate. All nations are to be evangelised and baptised first; and there is to be a history of the Church, more or less protracted. Forgotten sayings of Christ's will be recalled and a fixed doctrine built up; persecutions will be endured and sins forgiven; whatever the Apostles shall bind or loose on earth shall be bound or loosed in heaven. These are points that, for ecclesiastical reasons, it interested the Evangelists to make clear at the close of their narratives; but they are not illuminating in regard to the idea of Christ's person or of his inner relation to the believer.

Consider, in contrast, the scenes in which Christ had appeared glorified. In the Transfiguration we are ushered into eternity. As in a dream, we have lost all spatial and temporal position, all relation to action and even to circumstances. Here are Christ, Moses, and Elias in the realm of light, in the realm of truth. How do we recognise them? We need no clue, no external point of reference. These beings are their own standard, and possess those names by an intrinsic prerogative. And they are discoursing about the eternal fitness of things: how proper and necessary it was that Christ should become man, suffer, and die, so that the world might be saved. This is a dialogue in heaven, a part of that eternal truth which fills the very mind of God.

Turn back now to the apparitions of Christ immediately after his Resurrection. What a strange difference! No radiance, no splendour, no heavenly peace or intellectual dominion. Elusive glimpses. Is it a gardener? Is it a ghost? To reassure his bewildered disciples he must exhibit his hands and his side; seeing him and hearing his voice does not suffice. He is not recognisable at all on the road to Emmaus. He is busy with arguments, with warnings, with making appointments that seem afterwards to be forgotten. All this is life-like in its way; it belongs to the sphere of spirits summoned from the grave or haunting the night. But of the triumph over death, of the great solution, of the light of heaven, there is as yet nothing.

Like the shade of Achilles in Homer, Christ risen from the dead seems sadder, more vacant, more helpless than when he was living. And yet we are told that he was no disembodied spirit, but possessed his same body, tangible, material, and capable of eating and drinking.

Finally consider the Ascension, barely mentioned in the Gospels and described briefly in the Acts. The Resurrection, which is the central miracle of the whole history of Christ, had occurred in the night, without any witnesses. A semipublic confirmation of it was therefore given to the disciples, an official farewell, somewhat sad and cold, when they saw him finally rise from the Mount of Olives into the clouds. We are still in a sort of limbo or purgatory. The troubled life of the Church militant opens before us, and Christ, retired to heaven, remains with us only ideally, or in the sacraments, or in the laboured controversial pronouncements of the Church. Everything thus remains in suspense; we must continue to live by faith and hope, and the solution will come only at the Last Day, when Christ will appear again, really alive, with the hosts of heaven in all their glory.

All-important, on the other hand, is the fact of the Resurrection of Christ with the same material body yet with changed aspects and powers; for this is the model of the Resurrection that all men may hope for and of their everlasting life. Since the body did not remain in the grave, we are forbidden to suppose that the risen Christ has a different kind of astral or ethereal body, perhaps an effluence or voluntary projection of the soul, variable at will, such as angels and disembodied vagrant spirits were reputed to have at their command. No; Christ takes pains to convince his disciples that he is no spirit or spectre, but the same bodily person of flesh and bone. *Behold my hands and my feet*, he says, *that it is I myself, handle me and see, for a spirit hath not flesh and bones, as ye see me have.*

An implication of this physical resurrection is this: Heaven must be a spatial region, where material bodies may move about and encounter one another. Heaven, like hell, must be a part of the

astronomical world. This was undoubtedly the primitive conception; but it is interesting to see that Christian faith is pledged to maintain it at any cost. If Christ rose not from the dead, as Saint Paul tells us, our faith is vain, and we are the most miserable of men. We have painfully persuaded ourselves not to eat, drink, or be merry, hoping for something better in the Kingdom of Heaven; and if we never rose again we should be cheated of our reward. All Christian virtues, including that charity which is the crown of them, hang on faith in the Resurrection.

It was essential, therefore, to prove that Christ had appeared with his own body; and the one convincing test was that the apparition should be tangible; or that by taking food it should cause the food to disappear. That would really prove that the body seen was normal, and not a ghost. Christ submitted amiably to this test, a little saddened, however, to see that it was demanded: *Blessed are they*, he said, *that have not seen and yet have believed*. He had always preferred, even when living in this world, to disregard the physical concatenation of things, and to trace only the movement of the spirit. Now that he had raised his dead body to a second life, destined to be everlasting, he had lightened it of some of its material qualities and turned it into what Saint Paul, by a contradiction that I suppose was voluntary, calls a spiritual body. It could pass through closed doors: it could become at will visible or invisible; it could blind people to its identity; it could transport itself instantaneously from place to place; it could rise into the clouds, as it had once walked on the sea. In fact, we seem to gather that even when consenting to submit to the limitations of bodily life, Christ had always longed to discard them. Humility and the desire not to perplex his good disciples had alone restrained him. When he was alone he was doubtless transfigured; and now, although he remained a man, he was a man already inwardly transfigured and at home only in heaven. This would not prevent him from speaking familiarly with his friends, walking and eating among them—though not for need of food—and lending himself patiently to their ignorant questions and innocent suppositions. God had

created human nature, why should the Son of God scorn it? Yet in order to dwell with him now men must first have received the Holy Ghost. They must have learned to be spiritual in their affections, to transcend themselves, to hate their father and their mother and their own souls, in so far as the love of them imposed any partiality or injustice. Then the spirit in them might keep their human lives and attachments as pure themes for intuition and judgment, as they are present eternally to the mind of God.

How tragically this transcended humanity survives in the risen Christ may be seen in two other episodes recorded, one in *Luke* and one in *John*. They are both pure apparitions in character, mysterious, dubious, dream-like, and seen in the twilight; yet in their intention and spirit they are less apparitions than visits: one a visit of instruction, the other a visit of affection.

We read in *Luke* that two of the disciples, not of the twelve, were on their way to Emmaus, when a *Stranger drew near and went with them . . . And he said unto them: What manner of communications are these that ye have one to another, as ye walk and are sad? . . . And they said unto him: Concerning Jesus of Nazareth, which was a prophet mighty in deed and word, before God and all the people: and how the chief priests and our rulers delivered him to be condemned to death, and have crucified him. But we trusted that it had been he which should have redeemed Israel . . . And certain women also of our company made us astonished . . . saying that they had . . . seen a vision of angels, which said that he was alive. Then the Stranger said to them: O fools, and slow of heart to believe all that the prophets have spoken. Ought not Christ to have suffered these things . . . to enter into his glory? And beginning at Moses and all the prophets, he expounded to them in all the scriptures the things concerning himself, but their eyes were "holden," that they should not know him until as he sat at meat with them, he took bread and blessed it and brake and gave to them. And their eyes were opened, and they knew him, and he vanished out of their sight.*

the essence of Christianity. Jesus was the Messiah not in spite of his passion and death, but because of them. Now this revelation subverts the moral foundations of Judaism and turns a political into a spiritual religion. There is still a glory promised, but it is not the glory that David and Solomon wanted. How disconcerting, how unintelligible such a transformation was to the Jews appears in the bewilderment and sadness of Christ's immediate disciples at the Passion, which, according to these very Evangelists, Christ had often foretold and explained. They dispersed; and they abandoned their master not so much out of fear for themselves—apparently they were not molested—as by the collapse of their faith in him; and even after the Resurrection they asked if it was now that he would establish his kingdom. And there is a pathetic, perhaps unintentional, symbolism in the disciples' eyes being "holden" throughout those surprising interpretations of the prophets and opened only at the blessing and breaking of bread, mutely initiating them into a spiritual mystery and a spiritual sacrifice. It required a different kind of intuition, a metaphysical rebirth, to recognise Christ in Jesus. The secret of their identity was far too subtle, far too revolutionary, to be conceived either by the worldly-minded Jews, or by the mythologising Greeks. It could be adumbrated only in obscure language about two being one and each abiding in the other.

How human, how much attached to the scene of his earthly pilgrimage, the heart of the risen Christ remained, appears in a different episode related in *John*. The angels at the sepulchre, and Christ himself in speaking to Mary Magdalene, had referred to meeting his disciples in Galilee: but this appointment seemed afterwards to be forgotten and the disciples were commanded on the contrary to remain in Jerusalem until Pentecost and the descent of the Holy Ghost. There are references, however, to a mountain in Galilee and to Christ appearing, perhaps there, to five hundred disciples at once. More precise and more life-like is the scene recorded in the last chapter of *John*. Seven of the remaining eleven apostles had returned to their native shores of the Lake of Galilee.

They were apparently recovering from their tragic disappointment and picking up again the threads of their old lives. Night was coming on and *Simon Peter saith unto them, I go a-fishing. They say unto him, We also go with thee. They went forth and entered into a ship immediately: and that night they caught nothing. But when the morning was now come, Jesus stood on the shore: but the disciples knew not that it was Jesus. Then Jesus said unto them, Children, have ye any meat? They answered him, No. And he said unto them, Cast the net on the right side of the ship, and ye shall find. They cast therefore and now they were not able to draw it for the multitude of fishes. Therefore that disciple whom Jesus loved saith unto Peter, It is the Lord. . . . As soon then as they were come to land they saw a fire of coals there, and fish laid out thereon, and bread. . . . Jesus saith unto them, Come and dine. And none of the disciples durst ask him, Who art thou? knowing that it was the Lord. Jesus then cometh and taketh the bread and giveth them, and fish likewise. This is now the third time that Jesus shewed himself to his disciples, after that he was risen from the dead.*

The beauty of this scene lies in the tenderness with which Christ, his mission fulfilled, his Passion outlived, already free, already in paradise, reverts to the haunts and companions of his first labours. He chooses them once more, confirms his affection for them, approaches them in disguise, so as to seem again unknown as on the day when he first called them, although he knows that they are destined to be apostles and martyrs in his cause and for his sake. He is not thinking of that for the moment, but only of them in their present bewilderment and poverty. *Children, have ye any meat?* He knows that they have been out all night fishing, and have caught nothing; he has prepared a miraculous little feast for them, when they shall come ashore; but first, to hearten them and restore their finances, he will give them a miraculous draft of great fishes, one hundred and fifty-three of them, and their nets not broken. The miracle betrays his identity, and Peter, who was naked, girds himself with his fisher's coat and casts himself into the sea.

Here something tragic intervenes. This Jesus who so befriends them, who had provided miraculously their meat and drink, and has blessed their manual labour, which he perfectly understands, does not seem to his disciples, as they come ashore, to be the same Jesus. They dare not speak to him. And he too, in spite of his good will, seems to keep silence. Their life in common cannot be renewed. His human gift of leadership has gone: he comes to them only with a divine charity, with a breath from the eternal world, that paralyses their natural impulses and even paralyses his own. They can silently worship him and he can silently bless them, but they can no longer live together.

Still, when they have broken their fast in a strange constraint at his presence, so familiar yet now so unearthly, he calls Peter and says: *Simon, son of Jonas, lovest thou me?* and repeats the question three times, as Peter has repeated his denials; and to the contrite protestations of Peter, who says, *Lord, thou knowest that I love thee*, he appends, also thrice, a new commandment: *Feed my sheep, feed my lambs*. He does not now say, *Preach my gospel*. The commission is the same in effect, but the form and the spirit of it are tenderer. Christ does not now wish to think of vindicating his authority or even of enlightening the world with high doctrine. He prefers to think only of fostering and succouring life at its humblest, at its roots. He is drawing his charity from its deepest and most universal foundations. The little lambs and the stupid sheep shall not perish uncared for. In every form life has its appointed perfection, its innocent health and natural joy. The lowest instance is as good a symbol for the whole as the highest, or even a better symbol, since the lowest form is present in the highest, but the highest is scarcely foreshadowed in the lower. For ultimately and essentially Christ himself is the whole life of the world. Unless we eat his flesh and drink his blood we cannot be his disciples, we cannot become what the spirit in each of us aspires to be. To feed us is to kindle that spirit in us. There are many pitfalls, many ruins in the way, many aberrations: but we are on the path, if we are endowed

with reason, towards union with God. Christ is God in man; and if we love Christ in his essence—that he is the divine Spirit incarnate and crucified in this world—we shall feed his lambs, feed his sheep.

This scene, which forms a postscript, as it were, to the fourth Gospel, seems to me most happily placed. Inspiration here has outrun the art and the intention of the Evangelist, and constructed a bridge from Christ on earth to Christ in heaven. On earth, he is a man suppressing his divinity: in heaven, he is a god sublimating his humanity. It was not possible in the Gospels or even in the theology of the Church, to explain this mutual interference of the two natures as independent philosophy might explain it. All had to rest on the monarchical theism inherited from the Jews; and on that basis, the two natures being separately existent and each complete in itself, their union could only result in an alternation of phases and a compromise in status; and this is precisely what we find in the idea of Christ in the Gospels. Christ there is descended from heaven, superhuman and the son of God, yet not quite God. To have called him God absolutely would have sounded blasphemous: it is done only once or twice in an explanatory or veiled manner, balanced by continual insistence on the subordination of the Son to the Father. And at the end, when Christ has already passed into the other world, and when, as God, he ought to have shone as he did when transfigured on Mount Tabor or when as Jehovah, in pure light, he sat enthroned on the cherubim's wings in the Holy of Holies, we are not favoured with any glimpse of heaven. Even the Ascension is tragic: a second farewell, almost a second death, rather than a second Resurrection and triumph; as if only after the end of the world could God and man live together happily, each in his perfection and both in their union.

The secret of this postponement is perhaps contained, though not revealed, in that mysterious injunction of the risen Christ to the Magdalene, *Noli me tangere*. Why should he forbid her to touch him? Not because he was now intangible; for he was ready to challenge his disciples to feel as well as to see the scars of his wounds.

But this was to be merely an argument for faith, a proof to the intellect that he still had his human body. It was not to be done in satisfaction of any affectionate impulse in his friends. Nor was it necessary for the doubting Thomas actually to touch him. The challenge to do so sufficed, and the flood of faith overwhelmed all doubt before any test was attempted. Nor can the reason be that Christ wished to repel the spontaneous impulse of the Magdalene to embrace him, after he had suffered her to bathe his feet in her tears as long as she would, and to dry them with her hair. He was not afraid of her passion when he was still a wayfarer on earth; how should he be afraid of it now, when he had one foot in heaven? Is not the cause rather this: that now there is a difference in kind, a radical chasm, between even his bodily life and that of those who have not yet died? Contact is still possible but might seem cold or discordant: the natural current is cut off between soul and soul. And it was in her case by an impulse of the heart, not at all to solve a doubt of the intellect, that she offered to touch him. Was he not warning her in order to spare her an unintended rebuff? When he should have passed, with his transmuted human nature, into his everlasting kingdom, and she, transmuted also, should find him again there, then there would be no discord any longer between her instinct and his dignity. There would be no gusts of tears any longer, no doubts, no anxiety. All troubles would have culminated in vision, all cravings would have been quenched beforehand in a flood of peace.

The Resurrection and Ascension of Christ, as related in the New Testament, thus leave us still full of expectation. Far from being the end, they announce fresh trials and make new promises. They do not open paradise to us, but, on the contrary, establish the Church militant: on the whole not a pleasing prospect. The interval was at first expected to be short, and the spirit of that expectation survives in the individual Christian, in as much as however long the troubles of this world may last for mankind, for each man and woman they are soon over. Partly for that reason, and partly by a cheerful

anticipation of that glorious liberty of soul which the Passion of Christ has made possible for us in heaven, Easter and the spirit of Easter seem, in some parts of Christendom, the crown of the ecclesiastical year. It is indeed, not by accident, the season of rejuvenation; and people who meet in the street cry to one another, *Christ is arisen*; to which the response is, *Alleluia*. By a genial fiction people imagine that the new year will be freer and happier than the last; that life henceforth will be mystically clear and beautiful. The Kingdom of Heaven, they say to themselves anew, is at hand. At least, it may now begin to exist within us.

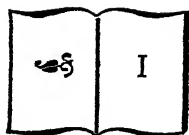
The Easter sunshine and the peal of bells thus come to promise to the Christian the satisfaction of a sentiment perennial in the human mind: nostalgia for paradise. This nostalgia is in one sense an illusion, because it represents no past experience (unless it be that of slumber in one's mother's womb) and no true memory. The garden of Eden is an inverted image of aspiration, like Arcadia or the garden of Epicurus; not, however, the image of a wise aspiration. We may fancy that children are happy, or that we should live better like the animals: but this is hardly the case. There is the seed of something else within us, and we cannot be so easily satisfied. The evangelical Kingdom of Heaven or reign of God is a much better symbol for the true good of man. This true good would be union with God. But what is God, and what are we, and how is union possible between him and us, and what sort of union? The idea of Christ in the Gospels is an answer to these questions, and a most eloquent answer; so much so that the imitation of Christ has become the path to paradise for thousands of souls. Whether they have reached paradise in another life the uninspired critic has no means of knowing: but I think that their lives here hardly present a satisfactory view of human perfection. Their model itself, the idea of Christ expressed in the Gospels and in the imagination of the faithful, we have found on examination to be vivid indeed, but not intellectually clear. Moreover, the union of God in his case was congenital and perfect; while for us union with God can only be ideal,

partial, and attained by an imperfect assimilation of our will and our vision to those of God. And it might seem, in view of the traditional picture of the risen Christ and of life in heaven, that even this partial assimilation of ourselves to God involves a most bitter sacrifice, such as Christ himself offered up; and that by that sacrifice and that death human nature in us, as in him, would be as much devastated as it was exalted.

An ulterior question therefore arises for a philosophical critic in regard to the idea of Christ transmitted to us by the Evangelists. Is it an altogether just ideal, founded on the true nature of man and of his destiny? Or are there elements in its Jewish presuppositions, and in the later Greek philosophy that served to formulate it, that may be discarded with advantage? A sincere consideration of these questions may serve to place our subject on a broader background and in a clearer perspective.

PART SECOND

ULTERIOR CONSIDERATIONS



TRADITIONAL ASSUMPTIONS

Having considered, by way of literary criticism, the idea of Christ as it appears in the Gospels, and having found that it gives an inspired dramatic expression to the felt presence of God in man, I turn now to a different question, and ask: How far is this idea of Christ, as being God in man, a philosophical idea, valid for all men and in all religions?

This new inquiry in one sense outruns my subject, which is the idea of Christ *in the Gospels*; and nothing is farther from me than to impute to the Evangelists the views I shall now propose, not to speak of imputing them to the historical Jesus, about whom I make no hypotheses. Yet in the Gospels the idea of Christ seems to be emerging from a background of traditional prejudices that do not allow it to manifest its ultimate implications. The risen Christ himself calls his disciples fools for not understanding that he ought to have suffered and died before appearing in his glory. Yet the prophets who had spoken of a man of sorrows and of the tribulations he must endure before restoring his kingdom were surely themselves quite unaware that they were foretelling the Passion of Jesus. They meant to foretell, or actually to describe, the trials of Israel at the hands of Nebuchadnezzar and other conquerors. Now just as the Evangelists drew their inspiration from that unexpected interpretation of the prophets, so an independent critic may interpret their idea of Christ as an inspired symbol for universal moral

truths, latent in their religious sensibility, but not disentangled in their habitual thoughts. They felt that God was in Jesus, and felt it strongly; but neither their idea of God nor their idea of the human soul was speculatively clear; and how God could be in Jesus, or how Christ could be in them, though they were somehow sure of the fact, was not expressible in their traditional language or logical categories.

Criticism of inspiration would indeed be useless if it were founded on an incongruous inspiration. This is doubtless the reason why such confusion reigns about the idea of Christ. The critics of different schools all have the same documents before them; they are all learned; they are all sincere; but each has an inspiration of his own, traditional or personal, which he is intent on identifying with the inspiration of the Evangelists or even with the historical Jesus himself. Why this forced assimilation between intellectual and moral impulses separated by great differences in date, in culture and in inspiration?

The reason is that these critics, while full of the spirit of inquiry about special points, retain at bottom their ancestral habit of faith, without perhaps any of the tenets which that faith imposed. They are blind to religious inspiration because they are hungry for religious truth. In their scrupulous scholarship they continue to assume that inspiration must be knowledge: therefore the text of the Gospels must be either literally true, both in history and doctrine, or else uninspired, corrupt, and of no religious value. In a word, these critics have not perceived what inspiration is, either in themselves or in ancient prophets. Instead, therefore, of catching the spirit of the Evangelists, and ruminating on the idea of Christ as Christians ruminated, they endeavour to distinguish what may have been true about Christ, because compatible with what the critics now believe, from what must have been interpolations and perversions due to superstition. By this uncritical method, they compose each his own idea of Christ, innocently proposing it to the public as the probable truth about the historical Jesus. But, historically, the

idea of Christ first arose in the minds of the disciples because they were inspired to believe that Jesus had risen from the tomb, sitting at the right hand of the Father, and would soon come down again in glory to judge the living and the dead. This idea existed before the Gospels were written; it was theologially expounded by Saint Paul; and fervently and piously enriched by the inspiration of the Church, which preceded and continued that of our four Evangelists. The faith of the Church created and developed this idea; in the faith of the Church we must look for it if we wish to understand it.

A critic must indeed have a criterion of criticism, and his inspiration might serve that purpose in his private mind or in that of his sect. But if he is addressing the uninspired and unprejudiced public he should rely only on common sense and on secular history and science, as modest and unspeculative as possible. With this criterion and careful study he may come to conclusions about the inspiration of the Evangelists, and therefore about their knowledge of Christ; but he can never reach any conclusions about the historical Jesus, because almost everything we know about him or reasonably suppose rests not on independent lay evidence about the person of Jesus, but on inferences drawn from the existence of faith in Christ in the minds of Christians. This faith had well-known roots in Jewish religion and in the moral condition of the world in the first century of the Roman empire. The special roots that doubtless had also in the personal life and teaching of Jesus, and the cardinal point that he was crucified, we cannot disentangle from the living image of Christ evoked by faith and perpetually renewed and developed in meditation. For this reason criticism of the Gospels requires a certain warmth of fancy, and a certain sympathy with *la fonction fabulatrice*: which is not idle dreaming or dramatic divination of potentialities latent in human nature. As in poetry, so in religion, the question whether the events described have actually occurred is trivial and irrelevant. Anything may have happened in infinite time. The question is what light it would kindle w

us, if it happened to happen. Facts matter little for the spirit except for what they mean to the heart. Whether the Christian faith is true is a momentous question for science and history, because it affects the conditions under which men must live and their destiny; but the spiritual value of the idea of Christ does not depend on its having been already realised in fact but on the depth to which it sounds the ultimate vocation of every living being. Lucifer might admit that a divine Christ had existed, yet might disdain to imitate him; and a disillusioned philosopher might aspire to imitate him without believing in his existence.

The Church, animated by the same faith as the Evangelists, but having had more leisure for meditation and more contact with heresies, made great advances in unifying and defining the idea of Christ. Almost all the Fathers were saints and some of them, like Saint Jerome, extraordinarily learned. Their intimacy with many oriental inspirations and pagan cults, together with their own zeal and spiritual insight, fitted them to fathom the secrets of the union, in a single person, of the divine nature with the human. Yet even the saints were bound in this matter by Jewish traditions and by Greek habits of thought. A more circumspect psychology and a critical mood towards religion in general may therefore not be useless in unravelling the mystery of God in man thus handed down to us in a dramatic and oracular form. For in my opinion this mystery is entirely natural; by no means the invention of a wild theosophy but only a poetic expression of the dawn of spirit in every reflective mind.



MONARCHICAL THEISM

There are religions and philosophies called pantheistic, for which the presence of God in man is something obvious and inevitable, since everything, according to those systems, is a part of God and perfectly at peace in being at once a specific thing and a phase of the infinite. A mystical unction is not absent from this knowledge that God lives within us, truism though it be; because if each of us, as a particular creature, can be only an infinitesimal part of the universe, still as an intensive reality each living being may justly feel in himself the potentiality and the dormant seed of everything else. This is clearly verified in the flux of persons and things in the physical world; for there the substance and energy of each individual visibly go to fashion things of which he had no premonition; and nothing seems to exist save in the act of passing into something else. Moreover, when living beings have minds, all things are capable of appearing in each of them in a new and marvellous way, as perceived, thought of, or remembered; so that in this ideal way all things may be endlessly reproduced, foreseen before they exist, and present still after they have perished. When a creature has a mind, God and all things, for a pantheist, may therefore be said to exist in him doubly: materially, by identity or interchangeableness of substance, and ideally by revelation to the spirit.

Nevertheless in these pantheistic systems no special advantage accrues to man by God's presence within him. A worm too exists

only because the universal substance has here taken that special form; and the dumbest or the most horrible feeling, as well as the falsest thought, is a spiritual echo of what is going on in the world, as spontaneous as the sublimest philosophy.

In Hebraic religion, on the contrary, the guiding motive has always been the advantage and moral dignity of man. It is a tribal, political, moralistic religion; and so long as it is orthodox it can never drift into pantheism. Identity between man and God, or literal inclusion of either one in the other, makes nonsense *a priori* for this mode of thinking. That which may then be investigated with profit is what degree of support the human will may find in the universe or may obtain from God by express favour. In little troubles and in great, it is always a question of salvation.

By the Jews the nature of God was not conceived metaphysically, but historically: he was the one who had led them out of Egypt, had given them the promised land, and would yet give them the Messiah. This God had a human heart; he had eyes and ears, and kept watch over his creation. His creatures might offend him; but in that case it was always possible for them to repent and to cry to him for mercy. And even when a man or a nation was condemned to disappointment, a safe and sweet life of obedience would not be denied them. If the fellowship between God and man was manifest in victory, it might prove closer and more lasting in renunciation.

This religion relies less on intuition than on experience. It studies *the ways of God*; that is to say, the treatment that mankind may expect at the hands of nature and fortune. Still, these ways of God could hardly be traced scientifically: they had to be conceived dramatically. God was an absolute monarch. The maxims gathered by painful experience were his commandments and laws, which he would sanction by signal rewards and punishments. Such absolute irresponsible authority in this divine government represents truly the non-human forces that control human life, both within man and without. At the same time the personality assigned to that ruling

power lends to general maxims and to national customs the definiteness of royal decrees. Moreover, this God is capable of sudden feelings. He can make exceptions, grant prayers and inspire particular resolutions. He is a moral being, makes plans, has enemies, and has favourites; and there is no reason to doubt that mysterious ceremonies and prescriptions, apparently irrational, may not be commanded by him and may not deflect his wrath. A traditional cultus may thus be associated with prophetic insight in the same living and popular religion. Nor is it unworthy of a spiritual deity to enter into these humane relations with man. To be flexible to prayer, to be capable of love, may be the inmost will of a truly living being; and the God of Israel was a living God.

Greek philosophers had a perennial quarrel with the poets for making the gods too human; and Christian theologians have also explained away the anthropomorphisms in the Bible and in the pious mind in favour of ideas sometimes quite metaphysical and mystical. I think a philosophical criticism of religion would do better to allow the poets, whether sublime or popular, full license in their metaphors, and to inquire what it was, at the level of human observation, that prompted those metaphors and made them applicable to natural events. All human ideas are, in one sense, anthropomorphic: the idea of God as a pure spirit is eminently so. We cannot help being poets; but we may make our poetry better, more harmonious in itself and more exactly symbolic of our relations to all that attracts and to all that controls us. Greek philosophers were themselves saturated with myths. They were merciless to the poet only because he was their rival in a kindred art. They could not discount their own poetry.

Now the chief characteristic and merit of the Jews in religion is usually found in the fact that they were not polytheists but worshipped only one God. Yet, philosophically, monotheism is common to all religions, because if you mean to direct your worship to the reality on which you depend, whatever that reality may be, your total dependence on it and ignorance of its intrinsic nature unify

your concept of it. If you divide that influence into parts, it is to the sum of those parts in their mutual relations that you are really subject. So Greek religion, when it survived in philosophers, became monotheistic, without ceasing to recognise the various traditional gods as channels or phases of the divine power that keeps the universe alive.

Critics have not failed to perceive the radical difference between this philosophic monotheism and that of the Jews. The latter became monotheists not by philosophic synthesis but by tribal and ritual exclusion. At first they did not doubt the reality of the gods worshipped by other nations, and later regarded them as daemons; but they were pledged to worship only their own God, who should have only one temple. It was an essentially political zeal that caused them to call polytheism an abomination: it meant treason to their people and despair of their hopes. That their God was the only God, or at least so powerful that all other beings, human or super-human, were subject to his nod, was an inference from their trust in him. He had promised to make them victorious over their enemies and to vindicate righteousness in their midst; and how could they rely on these promises if the God who made them had rivals who might thwart his action? He must therefore be omnipotent and the governor of the whole world. All the forces and conjunctions of forces that carry on the world must be secretly his single force and must conform to his eternal design. This insight indeed outruns, if you follow it far enough, the principle of monarchic theism: because a ruler presupposes a society needing his control, but prone to elude it. The omnipotence of a monarchical God must remain potential. He can bring anything he wishes about; but there are other forces at play, which require manipulation.

Thus the relations between man and God in this system are external and political. The two are conceived to be collateral powers within the same universe, but so unequal in strength that man is at the mercy of God. Yet not brutally, as if they were radically enemies. Both are living and moral beings, like a king and his sub-

jects. There is a natural affinity between them in spite of their different status. We are creatures that God loves to see alive in his world. We are, as it were, his pet animals. And when anyone has pet animals, however wild they may have been at first, he inevitably tends to tame them; for something in him tells him that they can be tamed, that there is a fundamental possibility of understanding and friendship between them and him. Wildness itself, with its brave virtues, has a deep charm for them both; and its presence quickens their mutual sympathy by the very sense that this sympathy can never degenerate into servitude or amalgamation. Something free and secret will always subsist in the heart of each. Nevertheless, affinity leads to familiarity, and familiarity tends to assimilation; so that dangerous differences gradually disappear, and harmless differences come to be expected and even prized.

Such harmony between diverse natures is usually established by mutual adaptation, as among friends or married people; but between an absolute monarch and his subjects the assimilation, at least ostensibly, has to take place chiefly on one side. It is by being obsequious that courtiers tempt or wheedle a king, or ministers guide him; though for the public he may figure as the sole legislator and judge. It is chiefly in these capacities that Jehovah made himself known. They manifested his special solicitude for his people, and at the same time his absolute and terrible authority. His very anger was caused by his love, because his beloved people forgot and disobeyed him. Had he not commanded them for their own good? His was not the brutal dominion of the herdsman over his cattle or the slave-driver over his captives, but fundamentally sympathetic, for in their maturity they were predestined to govern themselves by the very precepts which, by use of the rod, he had imposed on them in their foolish childhood. In the end their wild passions would yield in them to the legal and judicial mind. The relation of God to man might then be compared to that of the huntsman and his dogs: they hunt together. The wolf and the fox are their common enemies; and some special dogs may even be

trained to keep the straying flock of the Lord's sheep within due limits.

Monarchical theism may also be led to moralise the divine nature in itself, no less than in its action upon human fortunes. Man may then come to believe that besides sharing the psychic essence of God, by merely being alive and having thoughts of any kind, he shares also God's particular purposes and judgments. There may still be moral conflicts between God and man, because of man's blind passions and disobedience; but there may also be positive sympathy and cooperation between them in concrete matters, as in wars or in religious customs and cults.

This faith is a distinctive trait of Hebrew religion. Such a persuasion is morally encouraging in all worldly undertakings. Unfortunately, when undertakings have a long span and memory retains the phases they have passed through, events seldom confirm the original prophecies; yet the normal result of such disappointments is not to destroy religious faith but on the contrary to exalt and transform it into a more spiritual system. If God has not given his servants the reward they expected, it must be because they had set their hearts on unworthy objects. The true good should be conceived more heroically, so that material disasters may seem insignificant or positively favourable to the soul. At the same time the prospect may be transferred to another life in another world, so that earthly fortunes lose their finality, and may be instrumental in bringing about ultimate prosperity, even in material things. The moral cooperation of God with man may thus be reaffirmed in any case by making the necessary new postulates.

In the books of *Job* and *Ecclesiastes* certain perils of speculation began to appear in regard to monarchical theism. They were ultimately met by ignoring or transcending natural philosophy and public history and enthroning the moral sense in their place as the true seat of authority. Tradition and the fear of the Lord were not thereby jeopardised. In *Job* they are saved by prophesying that in the end the just man will always be vindicated and publicly re-

warded by a miraculous abundance of this world's goods. In *Ecclesiastes* the solution is more subtle and somewhat ambiguous. The wise man is rewarded by his very wisdom and resignation. Experience of the vanity of human wishes brings philosophic calm to the sage. Yet in both cases, without expressly noting it, the idea of God is itself modified. Instead of representing the manifest powers of nature and fortune, the idea of God now represents the authority of reason and conscience. Sanctions for this authority are indeed posited to follow, either naturally in the peace of a pious conformity with fate, or miraculously by a final reversal of fortune in favour of the just man. Even so, it is now in oneself, not in the thunder or the whirlwind, that the voice of the Lord is to be heard, enjoining this resignation or promising that reward. It is heard in the heart; and if what is heard in the heart comes at length to be heard also from the clouds, or from the public voice, this is itself a sheer miracle that interrupts the expected course of nature, expressly to satisfy the needs or the feelings of man. Religion thus comes to be based on the belief in miracles, not on the study of the normal ways of God in nature and history.

Here we may detect a reversion from prophetic wisdom to popular piety; for the people see the hand of God only in exceptional events, be they joyful or terrible. If all the passengers but one perish in a shipwreck, God is devoutly thanked, and perhaps a tablet set up in the church to celebrate that merciful exception; while the rest of the passengers and crew are felt to have been the natural victims of winds and waves. Theologically, however, it would have been more consistent to attribute their fate to divine displeasure at their sins, and the salvation of the one survivor to his special piety, or to the prayers of his pious friends. Thus monarchical theism may be kept alive in a world felt to be disobedient to God or independent of him, by introducing a secret network of miracles, by which the accidental conjunctions of things and the wickedness of our enemies are turned into means of grace for the purification of our chosen souls.

Speculatively, however, monarchical theism can hardly allow that the world is ever disobedient to God or independent of him in any respect. A man may indeed be free to disobey any one of God's explicit commands, this liberty being given him because God prefers that he should have it, and knows how to fulfil his own intentions all the more gloriously by crushing and eternally punishing such rebellions. But this solution, proper to strictly monarchical theism, as preserved for instance in Islam, may not altogether satisfy the sense of justice in gentle minds: and these must either bow to divine power raised above justice, or not attribute power to deity at all, but only an ideal supremacy like that of truth, beauty and perfection.

It was only, as it were, by accident that the ancient Hebrews stumbled upon such speculative notions: the refinements of their religion took instead a lyrical and penitential turn, as in the Psalms. Their instinct, when a speculative mystery presents itself, may be detected in the third chapter of *Exodus* where Moses, in colloquy with the Lord, suddenly cries: *Behold, when I come unto the children of Israel and shall say unto them, The God of your fathers hath sent me unto you; and they shall say to me, What is his name? what shall I say unto them? And God said unto Moses, I AM THAT I AM. . . . Thus shalt thou say unto the children of Israel, I AM hath sent me unto you.* Here is a profoundly enigmatic text to delight the metaphysician. Several systems might be deduced from it: that God is a name for Being or for Personality, or for the transcendental Ego. But presently an alternative more intelligible to the Jews is offered us: *Thus shalt thou say, unto the children of Israel, The Lord God of your fathers, the God of Abraham, the God of Isaac, and the God of Jacob, hath sent me unto you: this is my name for ever, and this is my memorial unto all generations.* It almost seems now as if that sublime first answer, I AM THAT I AM, had been a refusal on God's part to name or to explain himself. Perhaps what God may be in himself is beyond human cognisance; and we should be content to conceive and to name him after that which he is for us. In any case, we hear no more of this question.

Another fugitive oracle of a radically metaphysical kind appears at the end of the New Testament, where the seventh angel of the Apocalypse swears that when his voice begins to sound the mystery of God will be finished and there will *be time no longer*. There are intuitions, like that of eternity, that are intrinsically simple and clear, but become confused when spoken of in terms, like temporal terms, that are complex and dialectically elusive. Here, for instance, we are told that time will cease at a certain time and will not continue thereafter; so that the clear notion of timelessness, contained in every logical relation, is contradicted by being embedded in the medium of time. It cannot be at a certain time that time shall be no longer, but only at a certain height, in a certain synthesis, that time ceases to be enacted and is merely pictured as the truth about time. In this way all times would be present ideally to the dateless mind of God. With goodwill, however, we may neglect those verbal contradictions and be satisfied with the glimpse they give us of something beyond our habitual limitations. If we hear of a time when time shall be no longer, we need not trouble to object that that would be only a later time. Instead, we may understand that we are invited to transcend the physical accident of our place and time, and are to avail ourselves of our changeful status the better to survey existence in memory and forethought, so as to taste the ideal fruits of time without ceasing to undergo its material currents.

It appears, then, that monarchical theism, if more anthropomorphic than the monotheism of philosophers, for that very reason is more fertile in moral implications and may develop into richer religions. In representing God as a monarch we symbolise the relations of mankind to the external conditions of life, and quicken our respect for the powers of nature. By representing God as a lawgiver and judge we fortify and sanction the lessons of the arts and the voice of wisdom and conscience. If this humanism stops at the threshold of certain ultimate insights, which would disintoxicate it too much, it is positively favourable to speculation in other directions. For instance, when the image of a divine monarch is softened into that of a heavenly father, more is gained than a merely senti-

mental comfort; for it is truer to nature to conceive that our existence is derived, that we have been *generated* from kindred sources, than to conceive that we have been created by a sudden and intentional act of the divine will. If the creator is also our father, the affinity of our nature to his must be congenital. His commands must be friendly to us and must guide us towards the form of life that we should wish for ourselves if we knew our true possibilities. On the other hand the idea of a creator, acting with deliberation and full foreknowledge of the issue, raises the intellectual and moral faculties of man to an ultimate supremacy, since they are represented to belong preeminently to God. These modifications or extensions of monarchical theism lead to interesting alternatives in religious sentiment, which it may be worth while to consider before broaching directly the notion of God in man.



THE CONCEPT OF CREATION

"Creation" is a term with interesting implications which, as far as I know, have not been carefully examined. In its inspiration this idea is a refinement within monarchical theism. The image of *The Lord* ceases to represent directly the elemental powers of nature or the obscure forces that govern history; it becomes instead the image of an omnipotent magician, calling forth nature and history out of nothing according to a plan dear to his solitary mind. The idea of God remains anthropomorphic but is made more selective and exalted. God no longer battles with circumstances, but calmly enacts as if by deputy a premeditated drama. In its unintended implications, however, this notion of creation tends to transform divine supremacy into something less intentional, less life-like, and more like the ideas of fate, of truth, and of the good.

The keynote is struck in the famous words: *God said let there be light. And there was light.* God therefore preexisted in time; and the philosophic gloss, to the effect that time could not exist before there was a world in motion, while true in itself, does not render timeless this dramatic fiat of creation, as *Genesis* describes it. What the gloss proves is rather that creation can only occur within an already existing and living universe. The Creator in *Genesis* is a prehistoric being, living in time, revolving ideas in his mind, taking pleasure in some of them, and exerting magical powers to bring objects like those ideas into existence. Thus he will

render them also living and himself will live more vividly in their society.

Moreover, no mind could ever have framed the fiat, *let there be light*, unless the word "light" already signified something definite, a distinct idea of light breaking forth amid primeval darkness. Then by a miraculous power of evocation, God might cause that idea to be realised materially, and might actually see the light that before he had only thought of. And as he found the idea good, he now finds the realisation of it very good.

Creation thus involves psychological and moral processes going on in a preëxisting mind. It is a thoroughly anthropomorphic and mythological conception, appropriately heightening the normal experience of artists and poets into miraculous powers. It is therefore perfectly consonant with monarchical theism. God is represented as a *living* God, with a human mind and heart marvellously enlarged and endowed with overwhelming power. If, then, scientific investigation could go back far enough, it would discover the fact of creation, not creation of the universe, which includes the life of God, but creation of this earth and sky, and this era in the march of existence; just as, if scientific prophecy could go forward far enough, it would come to the Day of Judgment and the beginning of another life in another world. This is what the Bible, and especially the Gospels, expressly teach: and any explanation that spirits away this material past and this material future is incompatible with the Christian faith.

Such, for instance, is the view that identifies creation with evolution, and spreads out the divine fiat, as it were, throughout the biological development of living creatures. Everyone would in a manner be creating himself, and his ancestors must have been doing so from all eternity. In this would lie the free will of individuals, the very essence of life, and if we like to call it so, the stress of divine creation: for God would be perpetually creating himself by this process. But to begin by creating oneself is an impossibility, since one must have existed first in order to do it. We must all,

then, have existed throughout infinite past time in some form increasingly different, as we recede, from our present condition. We must all have been parts of the plastic stress by which God or the universe is perpetually transformed. And this so-called creative evolution must have gone on without the least foresight of what it was going to become. It would then not have been creation at all, but automatic perpetual blind metamorphosis: just what in fact goes on in nature, as a scientific materialism conceives nature.

This automatism when animals by trial and error have painfully learned to make their way in the world ceases to be blind; for then we can foresee and intend a great part of what we do, particularly when well-trained in some art; and we can often, when circumstances have not materially varied, bring about exactly what we have learned to intend. Here is the experience that inspires us with the idea of creation. Intelligence has arisen: it has become prophetic of the course of nature in general and of the capacity of its own organs; also prophetic, though more vaguely, of people's immanent thoughts and feelings: of what they are full of and able to do and say, although when the moment comes their performance is probably rather different. Yet the ideal of commanding themselves and commanding the environment looms before them, and when they are competent that ideal is actually realised. But it is not the images in the mind or the hopes of the heart that work this happy result. It is on the depth of the physical impression retained from things and on the vital readiness with which an "acquired reflex" or organic trope has adjusted itself to those circumstances that insight and intelligent action depend: so that the miraculous harmonies that suggest to us the idea of creation follow on our plasticity to the world that we profess to create. There is indeed in every living being an individual centre of reaction and preparation, a brain and a seed. In preserving and expressing ourselves we may transform our habitat; but this is only because we have inserted ourselves opportunely into that habitat, drawn in power from ambient powers, and consented to grow into what this occasion

favoured and the stealthy concourse of events was destined to support.

So much for the notion of self-creation applied to cosmology: but at the other pole of philosophy, in politics and morals, that notion proves no less incoherent. It abandons the moral advantages possessed by monarchical theism. For instead of securing a divine sanction for the teachings of human wisdom, an evolution without divine foreknowledge or design invites ripe wisdom and high ideals to yield to little pushes of blind instinct, and to lose themselves in the romantic uncertainty and plastic divinity of everything.

Orthodox theology, without abandoning monarchical theism and the kindred doctrine of creation, softens as well as it can the too human character ascribed by tradition to the deity. The fiat of creation indeed had a date in earthly chronology, yet subsists timelessly in God, whose life contains the vibrations and inner tensions of existence but contains them unchangeably. So, in regard to the future and to politics and morals, divine decrees and commandments remain invariable, but are eternally suitable in each case to its special circumstances: for God always sees every temporal event, and sees it always in all its relations. Christianity has no fear of making God unreal by making him perfect. It knows of a better way of making him human.

All the arts teach us that we may control matter if we respect it, and may find peace in the truth if we dare to see it. This secular wisdom is well translated into religious terms in monarchical theism. God is autocratic, an absolute lawgiver and a severe judge; yet he is approachable. Submit; submit even to suffering and death in your innocence, as Christ, who was God himself made man, voluntarily submitted; and you will thereby be raised to heroic partnership with your master. You will learn to wish what he wishes, and to see things as he sees them; and as he begins to dominate in you, you will begin to dominate with him. Plodding along this round-about path you will reach your goal, or at least come within sight of it; whereas flying about on the young wings of Icarus, you

will find breathing every hour more difficult, sight every moment more blurred, until you collapse exhausted and unrewarded.

Symbols, however (and all religious ideas are symbols), when taken for pictures of additional facts, have a deceptive side, and may misrepresent the occasions that suggested them. So the enthusiastic cry of the Hebrews that their God was almighty and everlasting went beyond the actual events that provoked it, such as the passage of the Red Sea or the conquest of Palestine. What these wonders proved was only that the God of Israel was, then and there, more powerful than his enemies, and could outlive them. That he would do so always and everywhere was only an inspired inference: it was faith. And even if this faith should be repeatedly confirmed by even greater marvels, it would follow only that this God could maintain his empire for a long time, longer perhaps than human foresight can trouble about; but if he is a being leading a life through time, there is no knowing, he cannot himself know, what fate may await him. So a God who *makes* the world, and manifests his wisdom by fashioning it in ways that it could never have fallen into of its own accord, proves that he has an imagination and an ascendancy capable of remodelling the reality that he finds at hand, as does every artisan and every ruler. But had he an instantaneous and unconditional power over all things, he would neither require to devise means to his ends nor leave traces in his work of difficulties vanquished or purposes pursued. Yet these traces of things done to nature which nature could never do are the proofs of his intervention and of his existence. If his presence has been felt overwhelmingly, it has been at the sight of miracles; for he is the unseen power that has visibly circumvented the inertia or the explosiveness of matter and the well-laid plans of our wicked enemies. He and his power, in our actual experience and conviction, are therefore finite, specific, and not identical with the universal drift and natural issue of events: they are one element working at present victoriously amongst other elements. If in our enthusiasm we proclaim him to be absolute, we are unwittingly introducing

into our conception of him an element that will undermine that conception and our whole religious faith.

An absolute omniscience and omnipotence can only be ascribed to God if we transfer the argument to the plane of eternity. Events will then be all synthesised into the truth about them, and the beginning of anything will not be the sole cause of the end nor will the end alone be the reason for the beginning. The will of God will then coincide with the history of the universe. Facts may remain contingent and free acts free in relation to one another; yet the whole series possessing this texture will have been surveyed and called into existence by an eternal fiat of the divine will. This act of God, though itself free and contingent, will form an integral part of God's life: he can never have existed before or without it. Therefore all the trepidation and insecurity proper to monarchical theism belongs only to the shifting perspectives proper to beings living in time. In God there would be no drama, but only vision. He would, properly speaking, *create* nothing, but simply perceive and bless all that exists as the perfect expression of his will.

This treatment of the matter assumes, however, an uncommon interest in ideal categories such as truth, essence, and eternity: whereas the Hebraic mentality was thoroughly positivistic. It cultivated legend and history, and loved to diversify its positivism with the most stupendous miracles, such as the seven plagues of Egypt and the passage of the Israelites through the Red Sea between two walls of water. The charm of these wonders was precisely that they were material facts, as real as those of every day, yet marvellous, and worked by God for the sake of his chosen people. This mentality persists in the Gospels and even in the theology of the Church, in spite of the strong Platonic influence that had helped to mould it. Truth and eternity, and essences of every grade, could not be overlooked altogether; but there was a strong tendency to materialise them, eternity being assimilated to everlasting time and truth to opinions that the believer was unable or unwilling to doubt. Idealism is fundamentally hostile to Christian orthodoxy. Instead of

nature morally knit together by ideal bonds, theology offers us nature interrupted and completed by the supernatural:

*Praestet fides supplementum
sensuum defectui.*

In the Pauline theory of the potter and the clay and in Moslem sentiment the full consequences of the idea of creation are accepted. God is not only omnipotent potentially but *omnifiscient* actually: everything that happens and everything we do or think is his work. The spirit in us must humbly and if possible joyously accept the position assigned to it for the fuller glory of God. But in popular Judaism and Christianity the fiat of creation is not felt to be the only and omnipotent ground of events: either a preëxistent matter—the waters over which the wind of evolution sweeps—or the free will of rational souls must cooperate, or both these uncreated sources. They must be uncreated, so that they may be responsible instead of God for the regrettable side of things. That God should have planned and imposed this regrettable side also is incompatible with a religion based entirely on morals. Omnificence would free God from human morality: a consequence welcome to monarchical theism and to unprejudiced speculation, but too unhomely for limited and earnest humanists. Orthodox theologians steer anxiously amid these cross-currents. They are pledged to the doctrine that God created the heavens and the earth out of nothing: the inertia of matter cannot, then, be invoked, as by the Platonists, to explain imperfection in the result. And free will, though admitted and sometimes emphasised, cannot serve in the end to construct a theodicy: for God had foreknowledge of the ill use that men would make of their liberty, and of the eternal punishment they would suffer for it; and nevertheless he chose to create that world, and to aid sinners in the commission of all their chosen crimes: for without him they could neither have existed, nor willed or accomplished anything. Divine responsibility for the entire course of creation therefore remains complete. God was hampered by no conditions,

occasions, or hindrances in choosing the world he chose, and in every particular it exactly fulfils his intention.

This is not merely a logical implication of tenets that might be abandoned: it belongs to the inmost nature of religion. God must be omniscient: he would be less divine than the truth, if he were not the truth personified. He must be the silent witness that searches all hearts, that knows us better than we know ourselves, and is the eternal haven in all doubts and errors. He must therefore be also omnipotent, commanding all events throughout eternity: otherwise he would be as miserably subject as we are to surprises coming from quarters beyond his control or calculation. There would be no more peace in his bosom than in ours; and his promises would lapse like human covenants when unexpected developments rendered them inapplicable to the facts.

Nevertheless, *within the created world* there need be no logical necessity. All events may remain contingent, all laws ideally changeable and perhaps actually plastic or only approximately applicable even when they apply. Human choices in particular may be utterly unpredictable by any anthropologist, historian or psychologist, and intimately inexplicable to the man himself who makes them, or in whom they occur. But then, paradoxically, the more groundless our choices seem, the less they seem to be ours: and absolute freedom comes round again to absolute fatality. I think there is a word that might solve this ancient riddle. It would come to us if we distinguished clearly the physical from the moral order. Contingency in the physical order is quite irrelevant to freedom in the spirit or to responsibility of a moral sort. If I heartily *love* my transgressions, and am ready to stick to them forever, I am spiritually one with them, no matter what causes or antecedents might explain my love according to the usual course of nature. If, on the contrary, I *hate* my transgressions, or *hate* my hypocritical virtues, God will not charge me with them, seeing that they were contrary to my free will, and only imposed on my ignorance and helplessness by forces hostile to my moral nature and hidden heart. Moral freedom,

therefore, does not lie in an alleged magic power to produce events contrary to the course of nature; it lies only in the physically undiscoverable love of the spirit for that which it truly loves. The will is free, not because it is uncaused historically, but because it is a moral choice and allegiance by its very nature. For, as Saint Augustine asks: *Quid magis in voluntate quam ipsa voluntas?* Love, which has obvious biological grounds as a vital habit, is spiritually the first possible seat, instance, and essence of freedom.

Now the creative fiat of God is a primary case of this moral freedom. Unlike a physical force, his will chooses and summons that which it loves. If he was an omniscient spirit, the whole realm of essence lay before him, all as yet non-existent, save the essence of spirit, fully realised in his own omniscience and moral freedom. Nothing external could prompt him or thwart him in choosing what he loved or in bidding it exist. His moral responsibility for creation is therefore absolute; and the fiat which we describe as if it were an event is really an eternal and changeless act of self-expression; or as the theologians put it, God makes the world for his own glory. Leibnitz preferred to say that God chooses the best of possible worlds, since no other reason for his choice is conceivable; and nothing, Leibnitz thought, could happen without a reason. Certainly any world chosen unchangeably in the clear presence of all the worlds possible must have been the best *loved* by God, and the best loved by him for all eternity. Monarchical theism requires us in turn to call that choice good. Yet if God had chosen differently—and his choice was admittedly free—a different world would have been the best in his eyes. Therefore in saying that this world was chosen because in itself absolutely it was the best, we are using the language of a courtier, such as Leibnitz was. In reality, nothing can be good absolutely but only in relation to some living being who needs or *loves* it; and it is impossible that there should be a reason for everything, or for anything fundamental, such as the will of God or the nature of things. And if we wish to be quite honest we should say that the only meaning in asserting that this is the best

of possible worlds is that it was the best in God's eyes, and that he chose it.

Creation therefore presupposes monarchical theism, and like the latter is an anthropomorphic idea and metaphorical. But it is borrowed from a more intellectual and better integrated side of human nature: not from the violent and capricious despot, but from the artist or poet, who works collectedly and expresses his inmost thoughts uninterrupted by any alien influence. Yet the two phases are but developments of the same masterful life; since a monarch must meditate his designs and measure the capacity and goodwill of his various servants: so that in the end, if he reflected enough, he would come to form a coherent ideal of policy and a coherent notion of the virtues to be esteemed in man. He would thus turn his government, if he could, into his creation, and his children into the dream of his heart.

At the same time the notion of God as creator tightens the moral relation between him and us. From being political, this relation becomes intimately moral and spiritual. No non-religious side subsists any longer in our virtue. We cannot escape God's eye or circumvent his plans in any particular. We cannot, with a good conscience, set up our own preferences, even when innocent, against his: for now he represents not so much our environment as the best part of ourselves. Our playfulness has become frivolous in his sanctuary; and we are gradually driven to attempt to transform our nature into a complete unanimity with his. Creation, though a pictorial and historical image, thus introduces us to ultimate spiritual problems that transcend the monarchical theism to which creation itself belongs.



THE FATHERHOOD OF GOD

In the Old Testament the name of Father is hardly ever given to God, although it is a natural poetic variant on the names of Creator and Lord. It is used spontaneously in other religions when the feeling of kinship with our sources and our surroundings becomes vivid: for a father is a source of our being that, unlike the ambient elements, wears our own form and species; and he is a master that, unlike a king, lives with us familiarly and knows and loves us individually. The *Chosen* People, however, were satisfied with this title, and not inclined to claim descent from God. To be chosen is in one sense a greater compliment than to be begotten. It implies a moral rather than a physical bond; it forms a political covenant and inspires flattering hopes.

In the New Testament, however, Christ not only continually calls God his Father, but teaches his disciples to call him so: something that in their case could be taken only in a figurative sense. Yet this figurative sense marks the complete revolution that had already taken place in the religion of the Evangelists. They were Jews, but they had broken with their nation, abandoned political hopes, and looked for the speedy end of this world and the coming of a Heavenly Kingdom where Jews and Gentiles, if inwardly transformed, might be equal in glory. Now in the *cadre* of this faith, Christ's impulse to assimilate his disciples to his own sonship had an extraordinary magic. For he was the Son of God in a sense not

so much literal as superlative. As he had had no father on earth, so he had had no mother in heaven, but was born miraculously and perpetually from the divine substance like Athena (who also represented wisdom) from the brain of Zeus. This mystery was ultimately defined in the Nicene Creed by declaring that Christ was begotten, not made: a most pregnant pronouncement that, at the roots of being, substitutes the principle of generation for that of creation.

For the Evangelists the matter had not become so metaphysical. They conceived it pictorially: that as God has always been King in heaven, so Christ had always been his Son there, whence he had been sent down on his earthly mission. And in these terms, too, the command, coming from the lips of Christ, to call God our Father, seems a mark of singular affection and generosity on his part; for we, who are creatures, are encouraged to assimilate our relation to God to Christ's congenital and eternal sonship. This is not impossible, because a part of us, the spirit in us, though created, is created in God's image, as if it were generated from him spontaneously, like Christ, who is his Word or his Thought; and in recalling this similitude to divine descent in ourselves, we are led to aspire to such a union with God as only identity of nature could render possible.

The inner economy of divine life lies beyond my subject, since it is not broached in the Gospels; yet it may be useful to observe that "generation" and "procession," notions that figure in the dogma of the Trinity, are logically equivalent to what we now call "evolution" or "dialectical development," the difference being only that in the natural world it takes time for the implicit to become explicit, whereas in the ideal sphere, as for instance in mathematics, implication involves no change and may be surveyed in any direction, as between a whole and its parts, or between subject, predicate and assertion. Now this dialectical relation of "generation" or "procession," which theology posits in the Trinity, polytheism, pantheism and naturalism (when the latter becomes poetical or religious) posit between God and man. God lives in all the parts,

every part lives in God; and divinity lies neither in the specific nature of any part nor in the passive unity of the whole, but in the inseparable life flowing through all, so that neither can any part exist by itself, nor the whole without any of the precise parts that compose it. Such an economy of mutual implication Christian theology ascribes to the divine life, but not to the relation between God and man, where it maintains the principles of creation and monarchical theism. By this distinction it preserves two things essential to Christian faith: the unity of God, in spite of the vital dialectic distinguishing the persons within that unity; and the moral and political relations of man to God. Such relations would lapse, if the dependence of the creature on the Creator were turned into interdependence between the two, so that the world with all its evils were made necessary to God's existence. Union with him would not then be the goal of any specific moral or spiritual aspiration. It would be achieved materially willy-nilly, whatever one was; and it might be enlarged ideally, not by purifying one's own nature, but by extending one's participation in life in every direction.

In the parable of the Prodigal Son we may see how Christian sentiment conceives the fatherhood of God. The bond of kinship remains fundamental. The two sons are neither their father's slaves nor his creatures: they are his heirs; he has begotten them without predetermining their personal characters, and he loves them both with a certain anxiety about their fate and a certain respect for their independence. When the younger one has claimed his portion and wasted it, he is welcomed back without reproaches. But observe the Christian revulsion supervening: the prodigal vehemently reproaches himself; and without claiming any rights of kinship, begs to be received as a servant. Yet a feast is prepared to celebrate his return; and we feel that his union with his father will henceforth be far warmer and closer than his dutiful brother's, because he has a humbler and a larger heart.

Here we have a perfect picture of orthodox Christian sentiment about the fatherhood of God. The bond of blood, the community

of nature, is presupposed and pulls strongly in both directions: but it is felt socially and morally, in terms of monarchical theism, rather than biologically. The Father is the Creator, the Master, the Judge, not the cosmic process of evolution; and the true union to be established with him is moral and spiritual. It is the conventional worldly son who will inherit the estate and deserves to inherit it. The prodigal who had other dreams also had another reward: because the universe and our bodily life are not made in the image of God; it is not they that are our Father; only the spirit in us is of his race; and, when it conquers the flesh in us, it allows us to become really his children by a regeneration and readoption, like that of the Prodigal.

In reality the material bounty of God in creating and preserving the world, with those picturesque beauties which it wears to the human eye, is not fatherly; it is simply procreative. Seeds of everything are scattered broadcast; some take root, for if none did the seeds themselves would not be reproduced. Universal sterility would prevail, and would cease to be an evil to anybody. But matter is full of potentiality. Everything seems to arise, or to threaten to arise, that can do so, and whatever circumstances permit at any point becomes actual there. We are planted, we are fostered; like the lilies of the field and the sparrows, some of us at least for a season find nourishment and protection enough to exist and to grow into what it was in us to be. But we are not insured against disaster: no provision is made for us in the long run. On the contrary, we are internally predestined to decay, even if the circumstances are favourable; and meantime we are at best endowed with the brave impulse to take our fighting chance. Vitality in us is indeed sometimes too timorous to accept this adventure without guarantees; and we attribute every happy accident to a special providence, and invoke divine favour for the future also. But this is an act of self-encouraging faith. It is true that we owe whatever good comes to us to God: but gratitude becomes presumption when a favour received seems to us a pledge of favours to come

ad infinitum. This assurance does not rest on observation of the ways of God in nature or history: it rests on revelation, which itself rests on inspiration overmastering experience and taking itself for a surer guide to the truth. The fatherliness attributed to God, therefore, is attributed either by resolute faith or by sentimental weakness; in either case it involves belief in revelation. It reasserts monarchical theism, and expects miracles as much as does the original faith of the Jews that they were the chosen people.

Fatherhood in nature, biological fatherhood, by no means involves the protection and indulgence that the poetry of home lends to the word "father." Much less does the indiscriminate fertility of matter involve any loving-kindness. Nature has no horror of the things that horrify us: infinity, emptiness, monotony, repetition, madness, waste, pain, slaughter, utter destruction. She is, of course, not intentionally cruel: her cruelties are inevitable incidents of her irrepressible propulsion in every direction at once. She brings everything she can into existence, no matter how brief, how tormented, or how troublesome that abortion may be. Now a father, if he were really concerned about the welfare of his children, would never bring them into the world without a reasonable prospect of finding a place for them there in which they might live well. But no such thought arrests the brutes or arrests the natural man in their impulse to multiply. In all species the waste of seeds is prodigious, and even the waste of births. And in the human family, though the parental instinct is strong while the offspring are young and helpless, really unselfish and sympathetic care for the children is far from general: what is general is a conventional treatment of them, such as is convenient in the house or prescribed by custom or social pride. Where tenderness and forgiveness are found at all it is usually in the mother: the father retains the monarchical character of judge and source of supplies, with whom friendship, if it exists, turns on intellectual, moral and political guidance on his part, rather than on personal intimacy or sense of kinship. The analogy of the typical human father does not,

therefore, carry us far towards the truly Christian idea of God. It is rather the analogy of monarch and voluntary creator that remains dominant in this religion.

Nevertheless, generation runs much deeper, both in the idea of Christ and in the actual economy of spirit, than does the relation of ruler to subject or of designer to anything designed. The most absolute king is not responsible for his people or for his ministers: his subjects are such as fate has given him, and his ministers such as impose themselves on him and on their following by their arts. The nominal ruler seldom has the skill or initiative to remodel them after his own heart. He rules by obeying. He has to be a man of his own time, of his own court, of his own army. These are more responsible for him than he is for them. Even when he has a strong character and occasions arise for him to exert it efficaciously, the ultimate results will not be what he foresaw or desired. All will grow of itself out of the same obscure network of causes that made him what he was: and to float down that stream in good weather, or swim against it desperately in some adverse flood, will be the crowning manifestation of his power.

Nor is automatism less fundamental where the material worked upon is comparatively malleable, and the operation secret or private, as it is for the poet or artist. We commonly speak as if artists and poets were possessed from the beginning with definite ideas, which it was a simple process of copying to carry out materially. But if the creator were a pure spirit, with ideas perfectly clear and fixed, the reproduction of them in words or in matter would be a sheer miracle, as the creation is in *Genesis*. The normal creator must belong to the same world as his works: he must first have been, in his own person, one of its automatic products. He must have eyes, tongue and hands to watch the world he would master, and to insert into it at the right place and moment the little word or the little push that, working in it, may transform it. And in living minds the idea of a world, as it is or as it should be, does not arise of its own accord but in behalf of needs and impulses already

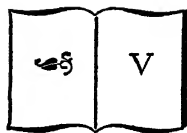
rooted in the animal soul. In reality it is always one world that generates another, however great may be the transformation brought about spontaneously by some sudden explosion or in some established cycle of vital phases. Nor is such a cycle invariable. Accidents may modify it, as accidents originally led it to settle down into a particular round.

Even if we allow (what is frankly superstitious) the magic power of an idea, still disembodied, to materialise itself without the aid of any material concurrence, it will still be automatism that does the vital work. For suppose a poet laboriously composing a sonnet. The result will be called a creation of his, not a product of undirected evolution. Yet the more original is the guiding idea, the more inspired and unforeseen it will have been. It was generated in him he knows not why or by what process; so was the impulse to express it in words. And for this purpose he must adopt an extant language. And why has he been tamely led to compress and expand it, so that it may exactly fill out a conventional literary mould? Or perhaps, if he is ashamed of such servility, he may heroically discard all known meters, and even all intelligible language, so as to be more spontaneous and creative. But unfortunately the better he succeeds in this endeavour, the greater will be the part of his work casually evolved and the smaller the part deliberately chosen. The vital force of artistic creation is thus due entirely to automatic and undirected processes.

Now it is when we are spontaneous that we most truly express or betray ourselves: and a spirit thoroughly at peace with its sources and conscious of a power not its own, that flows into it and works through it, may well give to that power the name of Father: for such a spirit at once inhabits the world, and yet judges it as does the God that made it, inheriting his mind, and dispensing in his name miraculous favours. So at least I understand the insistence of Christ in the Gospels in calling God by that name, often repeating that the Father sent him, and declaring that he and the Father are one. Here I see spirit recognising its true relation to the

universe which gave it birth and of which its organs are a part. Spirit continues to be wholly dependent as Christ felt himself to be dependent; it finds itself to be sent, as Christ said he was sent; it knows, as Christ knew, that it utters what has been laid upon it to utter and suffers all that has been appointed for it to suffer. Yet spirit looks also, as Christ looked, towards a return into God's bosom, without any loss of its own light or articulation. For although spirit may seem in one sense foreign to its source, as light may seem foreign to matter, both light and spirit being immaterial, evanescent, and accidental, both are, notwithstanding, generated in the very depths of the real and the dynamic. It is the real and the dynamic that they flow from, express, and enrich. In them reality becomes an object of apprehension and delight in its own eyes, as God in the mirror of his Word first saw his own glory.

In this way, as bounty is the essential character of fatherhood in God, so sonship, or derivativeness, is the essential character of spirit in nature. Only that in nature spirit is scattered and constantly contradicts or forgets its several utterances; whereas in the idea of Christ it is conceived to equal the Father's life in scope and intensity. Yet even in us those scattered moments which are pure and true to the impulse that evokes them are our moments of moral glory: so that if a man could utterly consume and burn up his substance in kindling that flame, he would not think he had sacrificed anything worth having or forfeited his human dignity. On the contrary, he would be filled with a great pity for all half-realised and self-contradicting creatures, who never remember anything in the presence of any other thing, but attend to each only to swallow it, even if that thing be an idea. The pure, legitimate, divine offspring of being is seeing, and the ripe fruit of seeing is comprehending. That which biologically is derivative, the Son, becomes morally the crown and fulfilment of the whole cycle: for without the Word that utters and reveals the heart the whole dynamism of the heart would remain barbarous and blind.



MORALISM

The images of king, magician and father are drawn from the life of man in society. They are humanistic images. Yet they are turned in religion into images of the origin and government of the universe. That inspiration should take this turn is intelligible because the natural forces distinguishable by common sense have decisive effects on human welfare. They are our greatest friends and enemies; and poetry as well as prudence has always seen them in that light. Freely in myth and cautiously in cultus the pagans had described these ambient influences and sought to propitiate them; but when monotheism has ascribed all effects to a single cause, the friendliness or hostility of this universal power becomes a burning question; and the experience of divine favour or wrath becomes overwhelming. It becomes so, I mean, for those who feel intensely and think clearly: as to the vulgar, they continue to be pagans under all creeds.

Belief in a single God has an inner counterpart in making the soul single. To what is it that the powers of nature and fortune may prove friendly or hostile? Is it to one's nation? Is it to one's passions? Is it to some ideal of the mind, such as justice, or order or intelligibility? If the heart is firmly set on any of these objects, concentration on that object will make terribly clear the favour or the wrath of God. And since God is now conceived to be the only power in the universe, life will become a most dramatic dialogue between him and the single soul.

The Jews had posited that God was the patron of Israel and the vindicator of righteousness; but Israel was in captivity and the righteous Job in dire distress. How was this to be explained? In the case of Israel it might be done by recalling that the Covenant was conditional. Israel must be faithful to its God and to his Law, or his protection would be withdrawn. In the case of Job the matter remained obscure: for an ulterior reward given to his patience would not justify the sufferings imposed upon him or the scandal of such misfortunes falling on so good a man. But some suggestions of Job's friends, and of the Voice speaking in the Whirlwind could be afterwards developed in theology into a consistent explanation. Justice and right belong to a social order: they should govern the relations between beings living under the same conditions, mutually affecting one another, and in that sense equals. But God and man do not form a society of equals: man is wholly dependent on God, and God cannot be affected by anything that men may do. His will and action are therefore subject to no *jus*, to no social justice or right. He lives alone. But he has chosen to create mankind and to assign to them a natural and also a revealed Law, commanding them to obey both. The question between them and God is therefore not what is just or right, but what is licit or illicit: *fas aut nefas*. Duties toward God, then, are not rational, but partly instinctive and partly revealed. And obedience will be sanctioned not according to any covenant or imposed proportion to pretended merits, but by grace, and by partial assimilation to the will and the vision of God himself.¹

Here a remarkable antinomy arises in the religious mind. Those names of Lord, Creator, and Father expressed a sense of the humanity of God, assimilating him to a king, to a poet or artist endowed with magical powers, and to a warm-hearted, just, and venerable patriarch. Religion could then hope to secure divine favour for human ends. But now, after the message of John the Baptist and

¹ Cf. Saint Thomas Aquinas, *Summa Theologica*, Part II, Quest. 57, Art. 1, especially reply to Objec. 3.

the crucifixion of Christ, those human ends themselves had to be dismissed in favour of a religion that was an end in itself: the coming of God to dwell within man and to superhumanise him. In orthodox Christianity this antinomy is disguised, because orthodoxy sanctions and protects the natural man and remains charitable and prudent in its effort to render him spiritual. But among heretics and in the borderland between monotheism and pantheism the problem becomes grave. The effort to moralise God or nature, and to see in God or nature the model for human virtue—an effort which I call *moralism*—ends by justifying all evils and dissolving any definite human morality in theory if not in practice.

Christ in the Gospels is not in the least moralistic. He accepts as natural the hard economy of nature, where the sun shines on the just and on the unjust, where to him that hath shall be given, one taken and another left, and where there shall be weeping and gnashing of teeth. He seems even to take a certain sad pleasure in these severities. They manifest the prerogative of God, which is God's virtue, as obedience is the virtue of man: obedience and faith, which is obedience of the heart. He accepts with an even deeper acceptance the special mission laid upon himself, his humanity, his Passion, his apparent many-sided failure. Over all this there shines, indeed, a transcendent glory: but this again is a dispensation and triumph of God, not won at all, as moralism promises, by the proud cultivation of human reason and conscience. Salvation must come by a special grace, by an unmerited personal love on the part of God for particular souls, such as was the love shown by Christ for his Galilean disciples and for the many wretches that he cured and forgave. To be numbered among them was their reward for having worshipped God and not having worshipped their own virtue and their own judgments.

Two mistakes seem to me to inhere in moralism: one, that God cannot be good or worthy of worship unless he obeys the precepts of human morality; the other, that if God is not good after our fashion, our own morality is undermined. Regarding the first point

I would ask: If God conformed to human morality, could he be a god at all? Were he bound, for instance, to play the good Samaritan on every occasion, no man and no animal would ever suffer any distress; the whole order of nature, with the presuppositions of human morality, would be abolished. And in thus abolishing the world under pressure of his human conscience, God would have abolished his own functions as creator, governor, and father. He would have ceased to be the ideal object of religion.

Touching the second point, it should be observed that the ideal virtue of any living creature can never depend on the nature of any other: for this ideal virtue, by definition, is that to which this living being naturally aspires. God therefore, in creating human nature, has rendered living and authoritative over mankind the human ideal of virtue. If human nature changes, this ideal changes with it. So, once for all or by gradual definition, through instinct, custom, and the inspiration of prophets, God has imposed on man rules of conduct suitable to his human condition, together with the suitable emotions. These rules are inflexible, so long as human nature and the relevant circumstances remain the same, but are expressly different according to personal endowment, age, station and epoch. In order to be living, binding and practicable, laws must be suited to the living man. Otherwise the voice of conscience would not confirm them, and true morality would demand reforms in the morality prescribed. The only righteousness that God vindicates is that which people are capable of and circumstances allow. In that measure he continually confirms good men in their sense of duty and honour, and rewards them royally for the appropriate virtues that they may have developed. But this by no means pledges him to demand the same virtues from all men or all races or all worlds. Much less does it pledge him to imitate any of his good creatures or to resign his absolute freedom and lordship.

Thus conscience and reason may well be called the voice of God within us, but only as all the voices of nature are his voice, which all reach us selected and modulated by our special faculties. Such

inspirations deserve respect in the human world; great natural forces and tragic issues loom behind them. If suppressed in private, they blow the harder in public; and a man without a conscience is a monster, as a man without an intellect is an idiot. Yet to worship these inspirations absolutely would reduce them to superstitions. In themselves they are animal cries, ignorant of their causes and of their true validity. They must be interpreted like dreams and discounted; for spiritually they suffer a profound transformation in the light of truth, if this light ever falls upon them.

In regard to the word "good" there is an unfortunate ambiguity. If by this word we understand kind and charitable, like the good Samaritan, God might seem not to be prevailingly good. We are not all born well or happy, and our Creator is not always sensitive to our needs or desires; very much the opposite, if the orthodox doctrine of eternal punishments be accepted. But that is not the primary and vital meaning of the word "good." Vitally and intrinsically, good is whatsoever life aspires to in any direction; not, as in charity or kindness, the confluence of aspiration in one life with aspiration in another. Now in this primary and vital sense of goodness, as perfection realised by anything according to its own nature and standard, God cannot help being absolutely good and even, as Christ tells us, *alone good*, since God alone lives and deploys his being unconditionally, without any hampering or compulsory environment. An omnipotent life, that perpetually achieves whatever it aspires to, would be good by an intrinsic necessity. Any external criterion that we choose to judge it by would be irrelevant and impertinent; and it was moralistic insolence in Milton to profess to justify the ways of God to man. The justification of God's ways is that he has chosen them. What ultimate reason can any of us give for loving anything, except that we love it?

The dialectical irony latent in moralism appears most clearly in certain personal philosophies, simple and born full-grown, such, for example, as those of Marcus Aurelius and of Spinoza. Both

these solitary heroes begin by making vehement and sweeping moral demands, yet both in the end abandon all moralistic claims in reverence for the divine order of things. Thus Spinoza entitles his pantheistic cosmology *Ethics*, because he is led to frame it by his contempt for pleasure, wealth, and reputation and by his fixed ambition to "enjoy throughout eternity a continual and supreme happiness." He professes to have got what he wanted, although what he actually gains is not eternal happiness but only temporary happiness in intellectual allegiance to the eternal truth. And he ends by saying that "one who truly loves God cannot wish that God should love him in return." Such sacrificial worship cannot, indeed, be clouded by events since it rests on complete acquiescence in whatever may happen; but it expires at each man's death, and solves only theoretically, by a desperate contradiction to nature, all the misfortunes that may precede. Certainly in this "intellectual love of God" there is great elevation; it brings to a head that inflexible courage and honesty that characterise all Spinoza's thinking, even when his pious diction might seem disingenuous: because his religious emotion was genuine, although its object was not the object of popular religion. This very limitation of his sympathies has a savage dignity and strength, as it had in many ancient sages. It presupposes such love and respect for the universal order of nature as to render contemptible the desire for miracles or favours for any creature or tribe of creatures. The good that God loves is meantime being realised in all things; and it includes our good, in so far as we have the strength and the luck to secure it. So the Moslems are always praising "the Merciful and the Compassionate," while attributing to his will, as their "portion," whatever misfortunes may overtake them. The logic of this is sound: yet there is something false in the pretence that it brings happiness and salvation. It brings resignation or self-contempt or despair; it brings a savage courage and pride; but it hardens the heart to human misery and drowns charity in lust. Better, much better, for human morality to be humane than to be sublime.

The violence done to the human conscience by removing it from

its animal soil appears even more plainly in Marcus Aurelius. This virtuous emperor had a simple mind; his borrowed technique as a thinker was lax, not masterly like that of Spinoza. On the other hand, he possessed the highest breeding and station, and led the life of a soldier. Like any man who feels out of place in his world, he habitually set down his solitary thoughts, to console himself for having nothing to hope for. His philosophy was his religion. He hugged it as if it were revealed truth or a spar in a shipwreck. It gave him a melancholy ground for optimism. This radical contradiction was not disguised by him with pious phrases or by the arts of a sophist. He lived it out.

In man, according to him, besides the body and the breath of life, there was a guiding principle, τὸ ἡγεμονικόν; and this last was alone distinctive of man and worthy of him. It was his conscience and reason, and united him morally to the guiding principle of the universe, which was likewise reason and perfect order. To live according to nature was the great maxim of the Stoics: a superfluous maxim, one would think, for how can anything arise in nature contrary to nature? But many things happen according to the universal order of nature that are contrary or hostile to the nature of particular things, because the universal law or truth of nature cannot be disturbed, but the law of a particular body or mind may easily be broken by the intrusion of another agent. It is therefore a reasonable maxim to propose in morals that everything should be true to its own vocation or innate nature or specific virtue; as it will be if it be suffered to develop, like God or the universe, unimpeded by any alien force. Now man had been defined by Aristotle to be a rational animal; so that when he goes mad, even slightly mad, he contravenes his true nature and vocation, which is to be rational. But how, if he be rational, can he ever demand the impossible, or wish that anything should happen otherwise than as the order of universal nature demands? His reason therefore counsels him to conform willingly to that universal order which he must conform to in any case: according to the line of Seneca:

Ducunt volentem fata, nolentem trahunt.

But is it true, we may ask, that the *whole* nature of man, or of woman, is to be rational? An animal is called rational if he can be rational occasionally, in any degree: and he would cease to be true to his fundamental nature if he were rational only, pure reason galvanised, and not an animal at all. Man has also been defined as the animal that laughs: but does it follow that he would be false to his nature if he ever stopped laughing?

By this equivocation, apparently so childish, the most virtuous and earnest advocates of moralism are brought to the brink of denying all moral distinctions. Marcus Aurelius admits that it would be contrary to universal reason (which is identical with the truth about the universe) that bad men should be good; and it would be contrary to the guiding principle of the universe that there should be no bad men. Inadvertence or embarrassment usually prevents him from extending this justification of wickedness in others to any remnants of weakness in himself; and sometimes he upbraids himself for his little failings and proposes to correct them. But why should he do so? Is it contrary to universal nature that he should doze a little in the morning when he is tired? Why should he not cultivate the people he likes or not avoid those he abhors? Why should he not read the books that would interest him? Or even, if his temper had been violent or sensual, why should he not have indulged it, as did so many of his predecessors, not to speak of his son Commodus? That would surely have been to follow the guiding principle of the universe, of which the Stoic Cleanthes says in his hymn to Zeus: "That which is evil to us is not evil to Thee!" Such conduct would surely have been conformable to the nature of those loose, lazy, dissolute men that are required to make up the perfection of Zeus or of the universe. But, alas, it would have been sadly contrary to *the ideal nature of a brave Roman and a dutiful emperor*. Something traditional, temperamental, psychological recoils in Marcus Aurelius against what is self-indulgent or ignoble. He has an exacting conscience and honours hardship and even sorrow. He would have agreed with

Ecclesiastes that the house of mourning is better than the house of mirth. It brings us nearer to the truth of the universe: a sad truth only because the neglect of morality there saddens the moral man.

Yet one more step towards assimilating reason in us to the nature or truth of the universe might correct that sadness. Hints are not wanting in Marcus Aurelius that he feels the need of extending his conformity with nature to the extreme of being content with his own faults. Two souls then struggle within his breast. There is the chaste, thoughtful, harassed and scornful prince and heroic soldier, who remembers that (unfortunately) he is an emperor, bound hand and foot to a corrupt and tyrannical social order. And there is the transcendental intelligence observing all this, seeing its necessity, seeing its futility, and at once girding itself and sighing to meet its fate.

Such is the ambiguity that profoundly troubles an earnest soul open ingenuously to the truth of nature and at the same time vowed to the worship of its own moral sense. Only in the person of Christ, as conceived by the faith of his followers, does this problem find a solution. His person is divine and native to heaven: so that spontaneously and whole-heartedly he lives in perfect harmony with the universal order of things and with the will of God. Yet by a free act and prompting of God's will within him he has submitted, as in a dream, to live also in a human body, to suffer, and to die; and then, with true sympathy and tenderness towards his assumed human body, he raises it from the grave, and will henceforth live in it in heaven. In choosing an earthly life, as in first choosing a world to be created, God himself has accepted every detail in both as right and needful, no matter how evil those features may appear to one another or to themselves, when they are living beings, and no matter what suffering they may impose on his own human soul. He understands all these partial judgments and passions, and he shares them on occasion. Yet he knew the lesson of life before learning it by experience, as God knows

everything that he is not; and this prior knowledge continued to unite him to his Father, even in his worst human agony, with a closer bond than any that could unite him to his assumed flesh and blood, or to his disciples, except as these might come to participate in that divine union. He lived through his human life as a man lives through the profession he may adopt or the part assigned to him in a play: more or less completely lending himself to that convention, yet always holding in reserve his allegiance to his true self. God in him was living disguised, and his immersion in earthly circumstances could never be more than partial. At every turn he could remember who he really was, and could recall the omnipotent freedom with which he had imposed on himself this tragic incarnation.

This idea of Christ is more to the moralist than a mere picture of how human sensibility and conscience might be united with divine insight and absolute prerogative: it is also an ideal to hold up before the philosopher who cannot renounce being a man, yet cannot help transcending his humanity in thought before the overwhelming spectacle of nature and the infinite intricacies of logic. He can never, like Christ, attain to a perfect equilibrium of his two natures, each demanding and loving the other; because he is not God willing to be man, but man impotently aspiring to raise himself to God. Yet, with this model before him, he may at least escape the snare of moralism, that destroys the sweetness of human affections by stretching them on the rack of infinity and absoluteness. He may learn from Christ to cultivate and honour these affections for what they are, human and accidental, but ordained and sanctioned in that capacity by the eternal order of things.



GOD'S LOVE OF MAN AND MAN'S LOVE OF GOD

It concerns this inquiry to consider what can be meant by the love of God for the world, since this love is the avowed motive for the incarnation of Christ and for his mission and Passion. Following this trace we might come to a radical reason why the spirit in us must love the world and its own life in the world.

The notion of a love that creates or animates all nature seems to have been at first vague and vitalistic. The courses of the stars, the cycles of fertility in animals, and especially the spring, were poetically likened to the procreative passion in man, with its mysterious emotions and its fecundity. Eros in the Greek poets and philosophers represented *natura naturans*, the potentiality in matter working as in a seed and unfolding itself in every form of life. But by Socrates and Plato the tables were turned. Love, instead of being the inner vitality in matter generating ever fresh transformations, became the quickening of dead matter to imitate the fixed types of being shining immortally in heaven, or in the mind of God. Love then ceased to look towards the world's life, and became the world's nostalgia for its divine prototype.

It is only by poetic licence that the unfolding of *natura naturans* in evolution can be called love. That process is something unconscious, unpremeditated, unenjoyed, always going on best in profound slumber. The cosmologies that appeal to it are pantheistic

or atheistic. In a genial polytheism the pleasures of gods and men begin to mingle with the generative stress of the universe. This then becomes real love, the sexual and vernal passion of nature astir in her creatures: but it is a scattered, blind enchantment, possessing us we know not why, and in itself quite ignorant of its purpose. Nor does it always work for good, but often for havoc in the world and misery in the individual.

In the book of *Genesis*, where the Creator is seen gloriously exercising his magic omnipotence, we are not told that he loves his work, but it is evident that he does so and that he must; yet this is rather the joy of the artist, the victorious feeling of self-expression and enlarged domain, than any precise benevolence. Indeed it is not quite possible to *love* anything not yet existent, anything that we do not come upon as an independent power, by miracle friendly or entrancing. The mere poet's love of his works and his discontent with them are largely complacency or discontent with himself. It is a great undertaking, a great encumbrance, this self-imposed task of creation. Its joys are mixed, its light deceptive; and it often repents the author that he has not restrained his impulse to stamp his image upon a foreign substance, such as words are to feelings, objects to ideas, or an existing world to a free spirit.

When once, however, the rash deed has been done, works confront their maker with their separate fortunes, appear in novel lights, are turned, perhaps, to disgusting uses, and produce conflicting sentiments in his mind. There may sometimes be wrath, but the prevailing feeling is probably anxiety, disappointment, sorrowful alienation. It was when the creation had reached this stage of otherness from God that he really began to love it: for curses are themselves expressions of disappointed trust. And where mankind, instead of turning wicked, proved docile and devoted there was occasion for loving them with a special personal predilection, very different from the generic bounty of blind nature or of lordly munificence. Often, too, love and reproaches go to-

gether. These children know not what they do. Initially they are innocent, sprightly and brave, yet a curious precocity invades them, some devil possesses them, they instigate one another to collective crimes, and their spirit is smothered and enslaved in unnecessary passions and cruel sufferings.

It was this spectacle that moved God, in the person of his Son, to a new Christian love for the world, which is called charity: no longer the artist's love of self-expression or of the fascinating variety of possible forms, but rather love of something missed, of something defeated and unexpressed, to which this erring world was inwardly addressed, and for the lack of which it horribly and perpetually suffered. It almost seems, at times, as if the lower the world had sunk, the more it excited this Christian charity: but this should not be misunderstood. The call for help in that case is more urgent; but the degree of good to be normally restored by redemption in those circumstances is itself inferior and unsatisfying. Violent madness may be silenced, flowing blood may be stanchd, but life is not thereby rendered beautiful or even decent. That which kindles charity is not the evil in the world, but the hidden good that might take its place. For the goal of love is love itself: and the nearer the loved object is already to perfection, the better can it awaken and satisfy the deepest possibilities of love. For this reason the theologians teach that the first and ultimate object of charity is God himself. The remedial character of this virtue is secondary; charity hastens to succour the afflicted because the perfect good that it loves is so painfully absent there. Indeed affliction would not be affliction and sin would not be sin were no different condition inwardly possible for the sufferer and secretly desired by him; so that it is to uncover the good hidden by evil, and not merely to stop the evil itself, that charity is called forth.

The love of Christ for the world is therefore not radically different from the fatherly love of it in the Creator; only it has passed through the tragic phase of feeling the good lost. The good is then loved in its eclipse, which lends it a crepuscular and elegiac colour;

and even when recovered it can never be the same: richer and deeper, no doubt, for that intermixture of sorrows and shadows in it, yet also not so whole-heartedly and confidently loved: for its first allurements is now seen to have been specious and deceptive. It was not a safe good nor the only good possible. Charity therefore is no innocent, spontaneous, absolute love of things or persons. It descends upon them from a higher sphere, of which it remains conscious. It is such love as God in man can feel for the world. The Incarnation is subtly involved in the existence of charity.

At the same time, like creative love, this Christian charity is centrifugal: it must have real, not merely ideal, objects. Both types of love make for all degrees and kinds of excellence: both reverse the movement proper to mystic rapture, or direct approach to pure, ineffable good, without parts or variations. They see the light of that sun only reflected, and dwell on the humblest manifestations of the good, as on the Child Christ in the manger. Hierarchy, degrees, and differences belong to the essence of vital good, even in God himself: whence the Trinity inherent in his actual Oneness. This deployment, without which nothing could exist or enjoy its own being, is reproduced in the creation and in the order of society; also in the degrees and diversities of sanctity and wisdom possible to the mind. Charity by no means aims at reducing all hearts to a single pattern, but only at bringing each to clearness and peace in its own vocation.

I say advisedly clearness and peace, because clearness alone and an absolute singleness of will are present in well-knit human passions, as also in the brutes: and it is not the part of charity or Christ's love of man to condone or love these passions; only to forgive them. They bring clearness in war, not peace. They therefore involve hostility to the will of God, though this be excusable where imagination is lacking to conceive as good and as willed by God anything but the object of one's ruling passion. But the Christian should love his enemies; and this brings peace, if not always materially, at least ideally. For if we recognise the initial right

of the enemy to pursue ends divergent from ours, we clear our minds of injustice and stupidity and even of rebellion against the will of God, in so far as he has breathed that spirit into those creatures. This is commonly understood in regard to wild beasts: but a refractory man is not forgiven. Charity also brings peace in regard to ourselves; for we then recognise the appointed limitation of our lives and of our possible virtues, as well as their sufficiency according to God's intention *for us*. It is in the absence of this humility that the moralistic conscience and reason depart from charity; for they presume to impose themselves on God, and to regard as totally depraved every natural will or form of life other than this conscience and reason of theirs. Therefore they are at war forever with the universe and with their own human nature. When the right and beauty of these alien things have been recognised, conscience and reason in us begin to be enlightened, and to turn into love of nature and of God. And the great boon of this light is that it teaches us to love nature, and ourselves who are parts of nature, as God loves us, without exclusiveness or injustice.

Yet under pressure of hardship and blind passion neither the will of God nor the good of man is easy to discover. The good attainable by each creature seems different at each moment; and desire or conscious love stops in each case at a different object or idea. When with experience interests are better defined, the wiser heads divide the powers that they encounter sharply into two classes, the good and the evil. Ultimately, if we look far enough, human interests are always defeated. Policy always evaporates in the end, if judged by the intention of the statesman; and even the monuments of art and literature soon lose their first function and become melancholy relics. But it is also human to reflect, to observe the ways of nature and to philosophize. Instead of living in a moralistic world, divided into two inexplicably hostile parts by the bias of human self-love, we may begin to live also in the impartial worlds of physics and of logic. These seem godless to

the ecclesiastical mind; for it is not under pressure of hope or fear, or by the aid of prophecy, that logic and physics study the power that rules the universe; yet they do study that power and reveal it to our admiration and to our prudence, and even to our liberated hearts. Thus they bring us round, without intending it, to what is in effect the love of God.

Originally the love of men for God appears as does the love of any fostering influence. Its object is so much of the unseen powers as may come miraculously to our assistance. We then love God in so far as he loves us, and fear him in so far as he punishes or restrains us. When these mutual relations are studied and traced dramatically, the art and the discipline of religion arise together: the art, in so far as we think we discover means of winning God's favour for our own ends; the discipline, in so far as we learn to bend our hearts into conformity with his dispensation and into joy in it.

Both this art and this discipline tend to establish fellowship between God and man, but differently. When we feel that we are assured of God's favour, that we are his chosen people or his saints, our success and security endear to us the world in which we move: we seem to have been made for it and it for us. Any change of heart would then be uncalled for and ungrateful. God has given us this paradise to live in, with these splendid opportunities for congenial work and abundant profits; and it would be madness to grumble or to ask for anything better. This may be called union with God at the human level. When, on the other hand, we undertake to extirpate in ourselves, as false and unworthy, everything that the thought of God puts to shame within us, the path of union becomes narrower and steeper, and the union then attainable proves, save at rare moments, less assured and complete: for it is exclusively spiritual. And this we may call union with God at the divine level. The union in both cases is genuine, as far as it goes; but the fields in which unanimity is achieved are different, and different too the disposition of the pious mind. The

field in one case is the world and our fortunes in it; in the other case, the imagination and the heart.

Since God, conceived philosophically, is immutable, events such as alienation or reunion can occur in the world only, not in him. Radiations of divine power and grace will vary in quality and date according to the fitness of the world, or of each creature, to receive them: so that from our point of view God will seem to be animated at different times by different sentiments, sometimes wrath, sometimes love, sometimes mystery and sometimes openness. In this sense we may say that on one occasion he comes down to us and on another draws us up to himself. The Incarnation is the palmary instance of God uniting himself with man at the human level. Yet the whole life and teaching of Christ, and especially his Passion and death, show that this descent was not accomplished for its own sake, as the creation was. It had an ulterior object: the salvation of man, his elevation from the human to the divine level. This demands a tragic transformation in man himself, who must sacrifice his animal will and a great part of his nature in order to assimilate his spirit to that of God. No wonder that mankind is recalcitrant: nor do I think we could blame them if *all* the sweets and *all* the virtues proper to our nature had to be renounced in honestly following Christ. But that is not the case. There is nothing more human or more satisfying than self-transcendence; and the liberation and light that come of renouncing the will seem, when really attained, the fulfilment, not the surrender, of our inmost powers.

There is therefore one strain in human nature that craves union with God at God's level. It may be called reason, but it does not proceed by reasoning. It may be called love, but it claims possession of nothing. It is that free life of the spirit which continually peeps out in intelligence and in laughter, only to be smothered again in the press of affairs. This is the element in us that we have distinguished and hypostasised in the idea of pure spirit. Spirit in us drinks in and watches all the vicissitudes of fortune, suffering them

all; but suffering them, as it were, from above, innocently and without contamination, as Christ endured everything human. For it is in the nature of spirit to transmute the physical impressions made on us by events into images and into enduring knowledge. God became man precisely to undergo and to transcend all that man may have to endure: and in Christ the spirit rises again to God with all its human burden, in order to preserve and eternalise this humanity, as spirit alone can, clearly, victoriously, and in peace.

We should never forget that the object of love is always a good, since love shines upon it; and that love itself, though it may be agitated and tremulous, is a foretaste of happiness. We should be seeing spiritual life falsely, with too crude a chiaroscuro, if we put all the torment, and nothing but torment, into love in the flesh and nothing but bliss into love in the spirit. The torment comes normally from some impediment in the bliss; and the bliss comes from the vanishing of some torment that was itself half blissful. The truest lovers of God and the most ascetic are essentially joyful; because a strong spirit, that knows and despises the world, has joy enough in its very freedom. All things are its own in idea, and to none of them is it a slave. It has begun to taste the bliss of seeing earth from heaven.



THE ANIMAL PSYCHE AND THE SUPERNATURAL SOUL

In the Old Testament the soul is taken to be the life of the body. To save one's soul means to save one's life. This was the public daylight view of the matter: yet as in all primitive peoples there was also a whispered crepuscular view of it. Ghosts of the dead sometimes rose out of the earth and appeared at midnight in their old haunts or in troubled dreams. This survival seemed something melancholy and sinister; yet it was destined to play a great part in noble religion and philosophy: and not without cause. For wherever there is appearance, animal faith and the awakened impulse to action impose on us the assumption of a reality; and in memory, in imagination, and in optical illusions figures constantly appear where exploration can discover no bodies. An elusive body, visible and sometimes audible, but not tangible, was therefore conceived to survive the gross body, and sometimes to come out of the darkness of Sheol or Hades and cross our path or our meditations. This elusive or astral body was the wandering and surviving soul. It had a substance, although a subtle one: for if it did not exist, it could never have appeared.

That wherever there is an appearance there must be a substance can be made certain by a suitable definition of terms. Let "appearance" be anything that arises only in and for an observer; and let

"substance" signify anything that exists in itself. It will follow that wherever there is an appearance there must be a substance *in the observer*: whether there be a substance also in the object remains an open question. Now in the case of dreams and imagination this question should be answered in the negative: there is then no substance in the ghost, but only a vapour in the brain. In the case of optical illusions there may be a substance also in the object, but not such as the appearance at first leads the observer to suppose.

In a ghost, however, popular belief posited more than a thin material substance or astral body; when the ghost appeared it also spoke and lamented its comfortless state. It felt and thought and was not only a wraith but also a *spirit*. This mental and moral life attributed to the dead was in keeping with their physical helplessness: spasmodic, vague, melancholy, and retrospective. Mind as well as body was but the shadow of what it had been in the upper world. This stunned and bewildered character of souls without their earthly bodies appears in all ancient poets, and even at times in Dante. These souls were still the life of such bodies as they had, groping in the twilight which they inhabited.

Besides all this, or instead of it, the Jews eventually developed the highly dramatic prophecy of the resurrection of the dead, or of some of them. Between the hour of death and the resurrection the just slept in the bosom of Abraham. A normal vitality could not return to them until the soul became again inquisitive and happy by resuming the functions of the body in the sunlit world.

This conception persists in the New Testament, and seems to have been satisfying so long as the second coming of Christ was looked for in the near future; and it remains fundamental in the official doctrine of the Church. When generations had passed, however, and the Church itself had become a world within this world, departed apostles and martyrs could not be conceived to be always "sleeping in the Lord"; they must be already in heaven, with Christ, in communion, through prayer and descending grace,

with their spiritual children on earth. Moreover, Christian speculation and sentiment had begun to be deeply affected by Platonism. Hence, while the soul was still a transferable substance and principle of life, its divorce from the body seemed less unfortunate than their marriage: and a wholly different proof was found for the survival of the soul; not that dead persons appeared, and that such an appearance must have a substance behind it, but that the essence of the soul was intellectual and moral, that it was essentially spirit, so that its inhabiting an animal body or exercising material functions at all was a descent from its proper dignity and must be taken as punishment or purgation for some purely spiritual sin of its own. The popular animistic, empirical notion of the soul, as a travelling substance or astral body, thus tended to be replaced by a mythological notion of the soul as a burdened self-existing and immortal spirit. Yet the Jewish conception of the soul as the life of the body, with the prophecy of a glorious reunion, subsisted in the Christian mind and had to be retained, since the central dogma of the Resurrection of Christ made it imperative.

Catholic theology has ended by subdividing the Last Judgment into two separate sessions, one private for each individual immediately after death, and another public, at the Last Day, as described in the Gospels. The hour of death thus became, for the believer, the momentous hour. It was then that his destiny was sealed and that he entered, with his soul only, into eternity. The final Day of Wrath lost for him all its dramatic terror and wonder. He could then be surprised and edified only by the fate of others. His own peace with God had long since been made; and the recovery of his body now had little importance.

There was thus a strong undercurrent tending to identify the soul with pure spirit, an undercurrent which came to the surface at last in Descartes. The Platonic myths could not be accepted by the Church. The intrinsic self-existence of each soul through infinite past and future time not only contradicted the dogma of

creation, but rendered theism superfluous. Gods might indeed exist, and one of them might even be omniscient and supreme, his will coinciding with the truth; but he would remain only one of the society of monads, and unnecessary. Furthermore, if the destiny of each soul was determined only by its own free actions, salvation, grace, and the effectual intervention of charity would be abolished; and ultimately that society of monads would retreat into a thought in a solitary spirit, and not be a society at all. Such is the nemesis of egotism.

It was therefore not until theology began to look to Aristotle rather than to Plato for its terms that a properly Christian theory of the soul was constructed. For Aristotle, as for the ancient Jews, the soul was the life of the body. This life, or perfect functioning of an organism, was no substance, air, breath, fire, or fine atoms, coursing through the body and escaping at death through the mouth. This had been materialism without dialectic and had confused form, because language gives it a substantive name, with a kind of matter. But life is the form or order that all suitable substances conspire to compose when any seed develops into an organic body. This form is hereditary; and the psyche is a name for the natural magic that keeps each individual true to his species and predetermines his normal organs, habits and passions. Hence the absurdity of transmigration; as if functions could migrate from one organ to another, so that the eye should hear and the ear should see, or as if music, which is the soul of the lyre, could migrate into an axe, or the power of cutting from the axe into the lyre. Nor could such cutting or such music be believed to go on in a vacuum without any lyre or any axe, any ear to hear or any wood to be cut. It will be convenient to reserve the name "psyche" for this biological animation proper to specific bodies, and keep the more poetic word "soul" for the notion of bodiless spirits, like angels.

Since the psyche, so conceived, is not immortal, it could never have been introduced into theology, had not Aristotle admitted

another element in man, absent in the lower animals, namely the intellect. This intellect, according to him, was divine and immortal; it came into the human psyche "from without the gates," and reverted at death to its divine source. He added that as man was specifically the rational animal, it was best for him and most truly human to live as much as possible in the eternal. These were edifying words coming from a pagan philosopher who four hundred years before Christ could not be blamed for not being a Christian; but his theory had to be recast. The Christian soul could not be uncreated, and like the psyche it must belong to its body and must carry away forever its memory and character and all its congenital bonds with earth, home and nation; yet it must be separable from these circumstances and destined to live in another world. Nor will the word "intellect" do to indicate the life of God or the godlike element in ourselves; both must be personal and distinct spirits.

These requirements were fulfilled in the Thomistic doctrine of the soul, which may be found summed up poetically by Dante in the twenty-fifth canto of the *Purgatorio*. The parts that concern us may be paraphrased as follows:

Blood purer and richer than that which courses through the veins gathers in the heart. This perfect blood is potent to turn into all the organs of the body. From the heart it descends in due season to the appointed places, where after the male seed has mingled with the female, it begins to live. The active element in that blood then becomes a soul, as if life had reached here what it was striving after in the plants. Now it stirs and is sensitive, like a sea fungus, and gradually assumes the form of those organs with which it was pregnant. Thus is the virtue hidden in the fertile heart by turns deployed and concentrated.

But thou wilt wonder how this animal soul ever grows rational. Know then that as soon as in the foetus the brain is fully formed, God, the prime mover of all things, turns towards it, well pleased

with that masterpiece of nature's art, and breathes upon it an added breath of life, rich in still greater virtue. Whatsoever was active in the animal soul, the new spirit draws into its own orbit, and out of the two fashions a single soul that lives and feels and turns back upon itself in thought. To thee, if this seem marvellous, consider the warmth of the sun, which, mingling with the vine-sap, turns it into wine. And when Lachesis has spun her thread to the end, the human spirit departs from the flesh, bearing away with it the potency of all in man that was animal and of all that was divine.

Notable in this theory of the soul is the simple good faith with which a physical origin is assigned to life, in such terms as the science of the day afforded. Naturalism is accepted as far as it will go; but, since Christian faith must be safeguarded, nature is extended congruously and continuously into another sphere, not normally revealed to the senses, but designed to crown earthly life ideally and to explain it morally. The system is therefore properly called *supernatural*. Far from abolishing the real and material world, it adopts and completes it, as the rational soul in man adopts and perfects his animal psyche, or as the divine person in Christ adopts and sanctifies his humanity.

Notable also is the point at which the spiritual element is introduced, not at all the place where modern philosophy sees a chasm between matter and mind. Here life grows of itself out of the depths of matter, and no break is made between physical life and feeling or perception. Where a chasm is discovered is between animal sensation and an intellect capable of forming general ideas and reasoning about them in words. Ancient unsophisticated science never doubted that the *dynamic object* of sensation was a material thing, and that the *logical theme* of definition or thought was an essence. What antiquity failed to perceive, or never took to heart, was that the *subject* in both cases is equally spiritual. If, then, sensation could spring of itself out of motion and physical

tension, there is no occasion to suppose that reason or language came to the psyche from outside. Nor does the ideality or eternity of the theme, when it is an essence, involve any eternity in the intuition that apprehends it. It is the themes entertained that establish the degrees of dignity in apprehension, not the mere light of attention falling upon them, like the sun shining on the just and on the unjust. A thought addressed to the eternal is as transitory as any other thought, and as much a phase of animal life.

The artificiality of this Thomistic doctrine of the soul is no fault of the theologians but a consequence of their fidelity to the faith they inherited. The theory is compound because it rests on monarchical theism, at once naturalistic, political, and miraculous; on which now a self-transcending spiritual discipline had to be grafted. They were therefore compelled to satisfy the claims both of the natural psyche and of the intellect addressed to the ideal and the eternal, and they do so by fusing the psyche and the intellect into a supernatural soul.

A striking analogy subsists between this union of the rational with the animal nature in man and the union of the divine with the human nature in the idea of Christ. Can this analogy be accidental? Is it due, perhaps, to a conscious assimilation of the soul in the believer to his chosen model? Or is it possibly an unwitting assimilation of the idea of Christ to the felt duality in unity within the human soul? Whatever be its origin, this analogy is important to our inquiry, because it clarifies the problem of salvation by the initiation of Christ, and helps to define the presence of God in man.

Lest this analogy should mislead us we may note that it is not perfect. For in Christ it is the divine nature that is original and persistent and that assumes the human nature as an apanage or appendix, and thereby the divine nature raises the human to a supernatural sanctity and power. In man, on the contrary, what is original and persistent is the animal psyche, which when assumed by a rational soul infects the latter with its hereditary taints, physical and moral. In Christ neither nature had anything to com-

plain of. Not the divine nature, since the lodgment and disguise of it in a man were voluntary, and a part of the eternal will of the Father eternally accepted and shared by the Son. Nor could the human nature in Christ, though it suffered cruelly, complain of being in any way denaturalised by its union with a divine mind, since it had never existed apart or acquired any habit of rebellion against the faith and love that flooded it from its beginning. In the supernatural soul of man, on the contrary, both the animal and the spiritual elements are in straits. His psyche is radically automatic, impulsive, vegetative, a temporary swirl in inorganic dust; for nine months this animal psyche had presided with perfect competence over the growth of the body, with all its organs and eventual passions in the bud. Is it not an unmerited exaction to impose a supernatural regimen on this natural creature and to denounce its native will as so much sin and rebellion? Has not God angels enough in heaven that love nothing but what he loves and desire nothing but to see his face and sing his praises? Why could he not leave mankind to their natural virtues, which they could practise gladly and nobly? Why demand other virtues from them, in which they must always fall short? Nor are the protests of the rational soul, though less often uttered, less forcible and well grounded. How should a free and rational soul, at the moment of its creation, be infected, without any fault or knowledge of its own, with the hereditary taints and passions of an animal? And how could it deserve to be frustrated in its spontaneous spiritual life by all the commitments and sufferings of so unnatural a union? Is not inheritance a sure sign of continuity in life and substance, and is not contagion a sure sign of parity of nature? A soul that carries the body's burdens must have sprung from the same root as the body.

This is so much what would have been murmured against the supernatural soul by the Old Adam on the one hand and by pure spirit on the other, that the theologians did not fail to forestall both objections by a bolder appeal to the miraculous. Immediately after

his creation Adam had been raised to a supernatural state of grace and endowed with immortality, for body as well as soul. It was only in punishment for sin that he fell back into an animal condition, subject to death like the animals; and while his soul remained immortal and rational, it was now beset by bodily passions not, as in the state of supernatural grace, perfectly subject to the spirit. His children were born in this abnormal condition, with a rational soul obscured by being lodged in a rebellious body. The life we call natural is diseased. No alien good is therefore proposed to man now by his supernatural soul. He is simply recalled to his pristine condition, to his truly *normal* life. It is not the body, but only the disorder and rebellion in it, that obstruct the soul. And if now the spirit (in us) seems to be caught in a trap, this is only because originally (in Adam) it had given licence to the body to fall into that trap. And now the grace of Christ is ready, if we believe, to get us out of it.

With an admirable consistency and courage, the theologians confirm and generalise this doctrine by teaching that no part of the direct works of God was intended to perish, and that all will be restored, and will subsist forever in the world to come. Christian realism and affection for matter, when matter is obedient to the spirit, thus are to triumph in the Resurrection; the endless reign of Christ will be on earth, or at least in a material world comparable to the earth. But there will be no marriage there, or giving in marriage, no new births or increase of population; and we may infer from this that if Adam and Eve had not sinned, when they had sufficiently obeyed their evident vocation to multiply and people the earth, they would have passed into a kind of chaste old age, with all their descendants also. The predestined ideal number of human beings, and of all animals and plants, would then bloom forever in a paradise without further fruitfulness or vicissitudes. All nature would be consecrated: an unchanging psalm would rise from all throats; and the sun and the full moon (as we read in the *Summa* of Saint Thomas) much more brilliant than

they are now would stand opposite each other, forever motionless in the heavens.

This is a strange picture, and I am not sure that the Catholic Church is pledged to accept it; but for my purpose here I find it most instructive. It shows us the supernatural, as it culminates and triumphs over the natural, triumphing also over itself, and culminating in the ideal. It does so unawares; but an arrested physical universe is something so utterly unnatural and contrary to life that it contradicts the primary Jewish and Christian prophecy of "life in the age to come." My philosophy would go a step further and maintain that arrested being contradicts the very essence of existence; because even the existence of pure spirit involves transition from term to term, culmination, synthesis, and retrospect, with the possibility of repeating identical terms in new connexions: so that to exist means to take form, to undergo evolutions, to run through rhythms, and to figure in a realm of accidental and varying relations. Neither life nor thought can endure petrified, nor could even stones so endure, if petrified at heart, since the distinction of matter from space and the existence of physical space itself require tensions and variable relations, measurable in terms of time. Static being is therefore something *ideal*, a term defined by intuition, attention and logic, but only an essence and essentially non-existent.

If we grant this, it follows that the motive which prompted theologians to attribute absolute immutability to God and to life in heaven was not love of life but respect for the ideal. They could not, however, express this respect (which they deeply felt, as spirit always must) without employing laudatory rhetorical terms which attribute to it an impossible life and existence. This some of them did enthusiastically, because they honestly loved life and not the ideals revealed in life; and they were pleasantly deceived by their own metaphors. But others, I am sure, felt the illusion contained in those metaphors, and sought to avoid it by using negative terms. That is an unfortunate expedient, since any ideal

essence, far from being negative, is pellucid, and distinct, and definable, as existing facts never are at bottom; so that in escaping myth by taking refuge in mysticism those sages did not reach the true object of their devotion, which was the unchangeable and eternal in its endless distinctness and variety.

On the moral side, too, *the ideal* is the goal of that aspiration which makes an unnecessary loop through the supernatural. When we place the good directly in the ideal we are for the first time completely freed from the predicaments of existence, without doing the least violence to nature. For the ideal would lose its moral ideality were it not, for some real person, the ideal of some natural demand. Nothing can be good unless something real aspires after it. And such an ideal good, like a visual or musical harmony, though it is a pure essence and static in itself, appears to the spirit by virtue of a myriad material vibrations, approaches, and conjunctions. These the spirit overleaps, and rests ecstatically in suspended animation before the transfiguring apparition. I say advisedly *transfiguring*, because to *figure*, to paint, define or possess mentally is to transfigure what we have before us materially. A living wave has mounted, trembled, and receded beneath; but only the idea formed by the mind remains for the mind, a milestone by which to measure its journey, and a treasure laid up in its private heaven. Facts thus culminate for the spirit in ideal revelations, in attainments or perfections of form: that is the only ultimate function that passing existence can have. The theme of such a revelation is not a further coming and vanishing fact, but simply that idea in its eternal essence, like the idea of Christ on which this book is a meditation.

Such a theme can be reviewed any number of times, and the total state of mind and the sidelights crossing it will naturally be different in each survey: but in so far as the idea is defined at all, it is defined, as that idea, forever, without forbidding other ideas more or less resembling it to be defined more or less differently. When ideas are ideals, when they express and satisfy a demand

of the psyche, their essential identity hangs, as does that of a poem, on fulfilling that precise moral function. Whether such an idea shall ever recur, or how often, or in how many different persons, or for how long in each case, all depends on the physical conditions that arouse it.

The fulfilment of any life or work, then, is not to be sought in another region into which we might walk, and where, as in the palace of the Sleeping Beauty, we should find all life paralysed, and the sun and moon preternaturally brilliant, both standing still in the sky. That is simply a misunderstanding, perhaps a verbal misunderstanding only, of inevitable but clumsy metaphors. If the world stood still it would be dead, and nobody could be alive to perceive it. But the moving world, when observed at all, is ideally, to that extent, synthesised and arrested; and when the power of the observing mind is enlarged and draws the heart deeply into its vortex, the apparition evoked grows more and more comprehensive, more and more absorbing, until it seems as if all knowledge and all bliss were caught up into it. Did this actually happen, as we conceive it to be always in God, the sun and moon would stand eternally fixed for us, not in one place, but in all the places and conjunctions into which they had ever wandered. All the sunsets, all the cloudracks and storms, all the tears and smiles of nature, would subsist as present truths, as they are eternally for having been so once. But neither God nor man can live in a dead world, or endure an everlasting paralysis of things whose very nature is to arise, to dance, and to disappear.

I think this paradox of heaven realised in an arrested earth typically exhibits the mistake involved in the notion of the supernatural. The supernatural is the ideal hypostasised. But if you hypostasise the ideal you kill it. To quicken it again you must revert to the plane of nature, reincarnate the spirit there, and let circumstances awaken in that spirit once more some eternal image of the real become an ideal.

Yet the mistake, as I call it, of positing the supernatural is no

gratuitous mistake. It arises in the effort to do justice at once to nature and to the ideal, and to vindicate the superiority, or rather the exclusive ultimate value, of the latter. For the good is itself essentially ideal, being good only because something existent and natural culminates and is perfected when it reaches that form. Illusion comes in, however, when the ingrained habit of speaking metaphorically congeals into an incapacity not to think mythically. People then feel they would be dishonouring the ideal, did they not materialise or personify it: not considering that an actual thing or person would have no excellence unless it approached an ideal demanded of it by itself or by some other person. Thus the ideal is really something *super*-natural and divinely authoritative over the natural; but only because the natural, when it has life and thought, posits that ideal as its intimate need and perfection. Yet this ideality of the ideal, which makes it an object of sublime worship and sacrifice, seems ironical to the materially acquisitive psyche, directed by its self-preserving impulse to gyrate and chase its tail forever in the vortex of existence. If ever this psyche becomes rational, if ever it can reflect on its own career and see its vanity, the very uselessness and sorrow of that mechanical prospect raises the eyes of the spirit to whatever joy and beauty may come to it on the way; and the soul is now a wayfarer with a religion, not avid for what lies before it but enraptured by what floats above. This the ancients expressed clumsily by talking of fame, or immortality in other people's mouths; and the moderns, perhaps by talking of honour or duty: but a more Christian and more natural name for it is love. Its object is not something coming but something already come.

It is this inalienable vocation of the spirit to detach itself from the flesh and the world that is defended by the doctrine of a supernatural soul; defended efficaciously for the purpose of moral suasion, but compromising the spontaneity and disinterestedness of that vocation, at least in theory, by buttressing it with prudential fears and worldly hopes. On the other hand this doctrine escapes

two pitfalls into which spiritualistic theories are apt to stumble. One is to deny matter and propose a moralistic or dialectical magic ruling a multitude of pure spirits. Against this the Christian is safeguarded by monarchical theism and by faith in the Incarnation and Redemption; these place the spirit in its true relations in the universe, though the facts may be veiled in myths. Myths are little deceptive when they are fresh and voluntarily poetical. Thus in Dante we have a material geographical Inferno and an astronomical Paradiso; yet the actual moral life of those disembodied souls contains nothing but surviving passions and bitter or pious recollections of life on earth, with a lyric exaltation of its ultimate lessons. That is, the supernatural is composed of the high lights and ultimate sentiments proper to natural life: it is the ideal invoked in a fable to crown and to judge the real.

The other pitfall in the path of heathen spiritual systems is the infinite. The infinite is inhuman and therefore non-moral. It should be recognised and respected in the realm of mathematics and of matter, of origins and primary forces; for here, however much the infinite may limit and specify itself, it always remains outside to laugh at those limitations. This ambushed infinite was well represented in the Christian tradition by the absolute and unfathomable will of God. But God, by his incarnation in Christ, has humanised himself, at least in all that concerns his providence and justice towards the spirit in man. If the will of God is inscrutable, it is also unalterable, and for our world it has published its decrees and granted us a covenant. Christianity is therefore civilised and civilising: it lives in a cosmos full of abnormalities and miracles; but these are recognised to be such, and do not obscure the plan and the possibilities of salvation. This is true to life: the human and moral world is small and clear; it has been circumnavigated a thousand times. There is no excuse in it for romanticism, which is another form in which the infinite allures the heathen soul. It would chase adventures and transformations forever, without piety for the past or plan for the future. It does not know it is a soul,

a natural psyche; it has no self-knowledge and thinks itself pure spirit. But such purity has nothing sacred about it; it is only transcendental. It lives to marry and divorce every inhuman thing, until fate marries it with nothing. This is a consequence of assuming absolute freedom and ignoring the animal economy by which spirit is evoked and by virtue of which it lives.

Might not the wisdom of the Catholic doctrine of the soul, its moral and spiritual soundness, with the idea of Christ for its model, be somehow preserved without what seems artificial in that doctrine? I think so. I find there various accidental assumptions, not drawn from religious inspiration or spiritual insight, but taken over from popular or philosophic errors. Why did Aristotle maintain that the intellect came into the psyche from outside? The reason he offers is that intellect has no special organ. Without replying that the nervous system or the brain or certain parts of it or the relational web and "central exchange" of all impressions and habits are its organ, it is evident to the layman that the whole man is the organ of his intelligence, for he is sensitive not only to the influx of stimulation from the senses, but to their order, their differences, and the relations between the physical objects that produce them. The larger and more clearly defined the field to which the psyche is sensitive, in time no less than in space, the more intelligent that psyche has become. Intellect is thus internal to the psyche and potential there, just as the psyche itself is internal and potential to the organism. Aristotle might well have turned his sarcasms about migrating souls into sarcasms about migrating intellects.

It is a natural illusion of the active mind to imagine that lights, colours, and sounds are resident in things and not evoked by the life of the body on receiving divers impressions. Yet no one would seriously maintain that lights and colours see themselves, or that music enjoys its own harmonies. Sensations are vital phenomena, and ideas are doubly so, since the psyche evolves them unaided. And it is in the interests of animal life that the psyche develops

those acquired reflexes which, when they settle into habits of quick recognition and appropriate action, are the outer evidences of intellect. The verbal intellect, the mathematical intellect working upon abstract symbols, and the poetic intellect constructing myths seem indeed to be disembodied activities: yet they fatigue; an opening door interrupts and defeats them, and what seemed luminous and self-justified in one mood seems dull or false in another. It is always the psyche that supports the spirit, and becomes spirit in her free moments.

This criticism applies with equal force to the belief that any inspiration comes from outside. Inspiration, in proportion to its vital force and significance, comes from the depths of the heart. This heart may be more or less impetuous, more or less chastened and instructed; but it is always the central life of the psyche that speaks when speech or thought is inspired and not merely parrot-like and caught from without. Whence should religion especially—so feebly supported by external evidence yet so mightily and persistently governing mankind—whence should religion come but from within? And this is perhaps less true of its errors (which are often, like Aristotle's, scientific, not poetic errors) than of its ideals and heroisms. That these flow not only from the heart but from the very nature of existence, from the inmost web of matter, may seem a paradox. For me it is a truism, and I will devote the next chapter to giving my reasons.



SELF-TRANSCENDENCE

That spiritual minds should appeal to the supernatural is not to be wondered at. Few are courageous enough to accept nature as it is, and to build their spiritual house on the hard rock of the truth. Moreover, tradition has consecrated a superficial and prejudiced view of nature, as if it were wicked or dead, and not the parent of their own spirit. It was a sad misfortune for Christian theory that it drew its philosophy from the disciples of Socrates rather than from his predecessors, who had faced the world bravely and without prejudice; for Socrates and his followers, in the interests of morals and politics, which in their time were in a parlous state, had thought to save ancient society by attributing to the universe, quite falsely, a political and moral constitution. This unhappy method not only verbalised natural science but represented morality and holiness as hanging on imaginary physical sanctions, and not on the inherent vocation of human life and mind.

What is this inherent vocation? At which moment of his life is any man actually the ideal person that he fancies himself to be and in whose interests he means to act? His faculties, his affections and his real opportunities have been varying since he was born. If he identified himself simply with his quiescent body, it might seem that his true good was always to be well fed, safe, and warm: so that his aim in life would have been attained only when he lay

in his mother's womb, and his only rational endeavour would be to return there. Yet when in fact he finds himself in the open he is prompted by his nature to attempt all sorts of perilous adventures. In childhood he will be constantly running into blind alleys, from which he will slink back in tears: later he may find many an open door, each with unexpected commitments beyond; and in time he may develop a professional or conventional integrity, and almost become the character that he is forced to enact. But in the most favourable case this social personality of his will remain an idea, never the same in two other persons' minds nor at two different times in his own. Can this vague and shifting idea, often casual and mistaken, determine his real nature and what should be his aim in life?

The most interesting of these spontaneous adventures, and most akin to religious inspiration, is prompted by love; and in this case the result obtained is that, in spite of inevitable disappointments and death for each individual, life continues to flourish through reproduction. Reproduction was, in fact, a prerequisite for the happy slumber that the rudimentary egoist enjoyed before birth. And there is no snare and no sacrifice that the blind impulse towards reproduction may not prepare for him, when he thinks himself most free and most clever. Nor is there any end to the anxieties, battles, and tortures that nature will lead the male and especially the female to endure in the pursuit of this end; an end that neither he nor she, in their conscious love, ever meant to pursue. Not that some day some reflective man, quite without passion, may not desire to have children. A patriarch may even set his heart, in harmony with blind nature, on having an infinite number of descendants; and more often a commonplace man may care for nothing so much as pursuing women and enjoying them. Self-interest would probably rebuke both these followers of nature; yet at times they might say to themselves that, after all, it was those passions that had made the high lights in their lives, and that all the rest had been a vulgar slavery in comparison.

Nature was indeed never directed towards making individuals happy. She had no means of knowing what any individual would demand before she had made him, and it is only in him, as her local representative, that she ever discovers it. There is little likelihood then, in the midst of innumerable other processes going on in the same field, that these particular demands should be satisfied. A demand is simply the conscious form of a proclivity; but proclivities are everywhere, each by itself, tending to precipitate in a particular way, and all together, by mutual impact, issuing in something that nobody demanded. But this result is itself unstable. Everybody, with somewhat altered interests, continues to pull his own way. His pleasures are in his thoughts, while his action helps to turn the world, for posterity, into something he never thought of. *Sic vos non vobis*.¹

Thus everything would seem to waste itself in the service of something eventual, unknown, and of uncertain value. Reflection on the "romantic irony" of such evolution led pious sages in antiquity to the thought, not that life was an automatic madness, but that it should be a voluntary self-surrender and worship on the part of existence: perhaps its object should be fame, perhaps insight, perhaps Nirvana, perhaps the glory of God. Before venturing so far, we may observe that the maxim, *Sic vos non vobis*, does not convey the full truth of the matter. The bees profit by their honey before man comes to rifle it; the sheep also profit by their wool, and the birds presumably by their love-making. The ox indeed becomes such only by a cruel mutilation; yet much as the bull would originally resent this outrage, when once his temper has been transformed by it, he acquiesces, and develops the virtues proper to his new condition. He becomes patient and stolid, plods

¹ The form of this epigram is inimitable, but the meaning may be rendered as follows:

Not for themselves their yoke the oxen bear;
Not for themselves birds build their nests, and pair;
Not for the sheep the fleeces on their backs;
Not for the bees the honey or the wax.

and chews the cud with a certain contentment. Thus even so violent a diminution of one's vital powers may have its compensations, as old age has; and since spirit can never live without specific limitations, any life that is lived well may be worth living.

This perpetual self-transcendence in existing things, irrational as it may seem, is self-transcendent in another sense also: it overflows, as it proceeds, into quite another dimension of being, and produces intelligence. Intelligence is indeed self-transcendence itself, become a principle of thought. Yet there is a radical difference between physical and logical self-transcendence. In the flux of existence, each state of the world, as it arose out of a previous state, so it lapses in turn and disappears, such memory of it as may exist being a part of the succeeding phase, not a survival of the previous one. The *truth* of history is indeed eternal; but the *view* of history taken by any historian is a part of himself; and all historical knowledge is recast in each generation, forming a fresh romantic perspective according to the dramatic genius of the day. That which actually occurred once cannot be still occurring now and forever after: it has become unattainable. That is the price it has to pay for the brilliant intensity of existence that it enjoys for a moment. In all other moments it can be nothing but a possibility or a report.

Logical self-transcendence, on the contrary, begins with some image or term or, as I call it, some *essence*, present by chance to intuition: an essence that may suggest another essence *logically* related to the first. In this case nothing in the first essence is lost or altered; the force of the conjunction lying not in the casual occurrence of one idea after the other but in the *necessity* of the relation which, each of the terms being clearly defined, inevitably connects them. The logician here is entirely accidental. In so far as he is a logician he is not a particular person at all, but pure spirit, the light of attention falling for a moment upon those two terms and revealing their essential relation. Each term transcends itself by its implications, which it preserves and which preserve it

in its identity. The glance that traces, by psychological accident, some one of these implications, although itself fugitive and casual, opens to the spirit that feature in the structure of logical being. Observation may immediately lapse, or jump to something irrelevant; but for that moment intellect has transcended all pre-occupation with existence and peeped into an eternal realm of logical implications.

Expectation, memory, and dialogue transcend themselves in still another manner. The actual datum is a fictitious object like a person in a novel; but it is taken for evidence of a fact: and the credulous intellect is launched upon a sea of conversations with its past, its future, and an entire imagined society of gods and men. At certain epochs the learned become doubtful about the gods; but the most critical sceptics build on the experience of the human race as if they had a personal acquaintance with it in its entirety. This would be an incredible assumption were it not for the fundamental naturalism of all sane minds. People are confident of the past existence of the material world, looking just as it looks to them now, and peopled with all the tribes and civilisations pictured in story-books. Therefore they are confident also of understanding what must have gone on in the minds of the people who led those pictured lives. But this belief in the material world, though fundamental for common sense, is itself transcendent and not at all unquestionable. Still it is imposed on us by animal faith, which is inseparable from expectation and action.

Arrest of faith upon the images of sense, or psychological idealism, is indeed transcended beforehand by all the beasts, more intelligent in this respect than the modern sceptic; for it is not the landscape that interests and excites the animals; they are nobly quiescent when it is merely a question of seeing the sun shine or the clouds pass. But the dog barks at the moon because he feels a disquieting influence, a secret danger, a strangeness that perplexes his instincts. He is at home only amongst images that at once determine his action, as when at last, recognising his long-lost

master by scent, he leaps up in a tempest of joyful affection. The dynamic mystery in things, the noumenal powers in places, the dangers and the lures of adventure are what he believes in and watches for. The signs of them in his senses he is too healthy and too brave to stop at or to value for themselves. Appearances sometimes deceive him by prompting the wrong action. They never deceive him into supposing that they are all in all. He may become an idolater, never an aesthete. Instinct and action are thus self-transcendent initially; and it is only by an inhibition of will and intelligence, in arrested animation or trance, that something not self-transcendent, an ultimate quietus, takes possession of the soul.

In a word, fate decrees that we shall take our ideas to be *knowledge*; and in this we are not misled, because in fact our ideas are signs of an entirely different, ancient, perpetual automatism in a universe impossible for us to fathom. The pictorial science of it that we possess remains only a symbol, save where it becomes purely abstract and formal, reporting certain mathematical harmonies running through nature, and does not attempt to substitute other images (which would still be myths) for those that sense and religion supply in abundance.

Interesting and absorbing as human knowledge may be to the contemplative mind, as poetry is interesting and absorbing to the feelings, our vitality prizes that knowledge most for affording a summary intellectual dominion over our circumstances and our destiny. Nothing in this knowledge bears to be pressed or scrutinised too closely; but most of it, if taken lightly and conventionally, as we take language, helps to carry us prosperously through life. Knowledge, says the statesman, is power; knowledge, says the prophet, is salvation. So once more the intellectual world is accepted only to be transcended. We depute it to make our peace with that illusive power that incessantly encourages and abandons us in our ambitions.

Knowledge is thus self-transcendent intrinsically, since if it were not transcendent and had no object beyond itself, it would not be

knowledge but imagination or, as the Indians call it, illusion. But Christianity, being realistic, conceives that knowledge has a dynamic object, the world, which the mind does not misrepresent altogether; but may describe more and more justly. For this world was made by God, who has a mind after which our own minds were fashioned. And as the world is his work, and simply one of his ideas realised, the truth of it is perfectly known to him; and it can be revealed to our minds also, in so far as we can assimilate ourselves to the divine mind. The *object* of our knowledge is thus transcendent, being an existing world and an existing deity; and the *ideal* which opinions set before themselves is transcendent also, being the truth. This ideal is realisable by us in a measure, because our minds are partial reproductions of God's mind, in which all truth is grounded and displayed.

Now *The Truth* is one of the names of God, and one of the most philosophical; and conceived under this name, we can see very clearly how he might enter into us, and how we might, as the full truth about *us*, have always been present to God's mind and been in that sense a part of his being. Parts of the truth can enter into us without forfeiting an iota of their absoluteness and eternity; and we, as themes, necessarily enter into the truth, preserving there our exact limitations and idiosyncrasies. Yet it will only be our portraits, as it were, perspective views of our evanescent flurries and tensions, that will subsist in the truth, which itself does not live, but is only a segment of the realm of essence: so much of it as God, who does live, chooses to exemplify in existence.

It appears, then, that life, no less than matter, knowledge no less than will, is perpetually leaping the chasm from now to then, from here to there, from me to thee, from the given to the assumed, and from all times into eternity. This may be denied, but only in a *post-mortem* examination of life. To be alive is to be inspired. When then the Gospels bid us abandon our worldly interests, to repent, and to set our hearts on the Kingdom of Heaven (however we may interpret these phrases) we cannot tax the Evangelists with

demanding anything unnatural. The normal life of many plants and animals (including man, who grows from a minute seed) involves complete transformations. Why should not the normal life of the human soul involve them? And why should premonitions of such an appointed metamorphosis not visit us sometimes spontaneously, or be awakened in us by the words and lives of prophets, more mature or more deeply sensitive than ourselves?

And in fact mankind is only too prone to trust inspiration, naïvely in prosperity and desperately in disaster. There is diversity in these inspirations, which is a virtue, but sometimes contradiction, which raises a painful problem. Is one inspiration right or superior and another wrong or inferior? Shall one man or nation cultivate the one and another man or nation cultivate the other? Or should each man cultivate all inspirations in turn, as far as time and genius permit?

The idea of Christ and his precepts answer these questions unequivocally. All inspirations are intrinsically good, but they form a hierarchy, and the lower become sinful when they disturb the higher. Where the higher are not sent, the lower remain innocent and amiable, as in the brutes. In man, however, the dominance of the animal becomes ugly and vicious; while in mature or highly favoured souls such animal functions as are not indispensable—for instance, the sexual and the warlike—remain in abeyance, potential in the psyche and understood, but never actually exercised. The inspiration which they contained transcends its original object, and goes to swell and to humanise the spiritual life. Christ and his hundred and forty-four thousand undefiled companions in the Apocalypse never felt those impulses come in animal darkness; for in their supernatural souls the *ultimate* goods to be attained by those inspirations were clearly visible from the beginning, and would have been obscured had the physical violence of any passion been suffered to dominate in the soul, even for a moment. Holiness is therefore selective and sacrificial: it excludes many things good in themselves that would not be good in the sanctuary.

Self-transcendence, then, or spontaneous intent fixed upon an unseen object, is no vice peculiar to religious faith but is the very breath of intelligence in memory, expectation, perception, and natural science. Common sense, the honest expression of what we constantly must assume in thought and in action, never reduces the object of belief to the vacillating ideas of it that we may form from moment to moment; and the successful effort of science is to change these ideas so as to render them less subjective in their deliverance and truer to their assumed but unfathomed objects. Language and ignorance no doubt tend to identify things with the names or the images by which we distinguish them. Genuine science, however, never outgrows the original human curiosity and confidence, visible in every child, eager to investigate the unknown. To ask a question is to betray belief in the transcendent; also belief in the possibility of learning the truth about it.

Nor is the quite original and symbolic character of the terms in which revelations may reach us any obstacle in the path of knowledge or of love. In the beginning the eye and the ear report the same material world in two sets of entirely different and incommensurable sensations, sights and sounds; yet the two witnesses supplement each other's evidence, and are equally trustworthy, though both invent every word they say. If I see an explosion, my belief is not contradicted if some seconds later I hear it. On the contrary, I am confirmed in the interpretation that I gave to the first sign by the interpretation that I can give to the second. They brought me tidings, each in its own language, of the same physical fact. As to what this fact may be in itself, there is abstractness and variation in the oracles of science, in proportion as they transcend the images of sense and trace deeper, unsuspected webs of relation connecting the parts of nature in the dark. The danger to valid speculation is precisely to rest content with some image, like that of the round sky in ancient astronomy, or in some form of words called a law of nature. Such arrest destroys at that point the original self-transcendence native to perception, and takes the

symbol for the object, as idolatry is accused of doing in religion. But I think there is less dense idolatry in religion than in language and in the literary vesture of common opinion in morals and politics. The ancient Jews, for example, gave the world a ringing lesson in the need of transcendence when they proclaimed the worship of images to be an abomination. A political motive lay behind this enlightenment, because the trust in images persisted among their own people and dishonoured the singleness of their devotion to the living invisible God of their nation. The one imageless Temple was jealous of hilltop shrines and household Penates. The usual argument against idolatry was derision; the heathen were fools to pray to stocks and stones that could neither see nor hear. But the heathen were not idiots: they were artists; and if sometimes their thoughts were arrested on some colossal image without clearly transcending to the unseen Power that it symbolised, this was but a momentary trance of the senses; and if ever a statue was reported to have spoken or to have nodded, the miracle was hailed as an exceptional sign that the god had come into his statue and granted their prayer. So Jehovah himself was reported sometimes to appear in glory, seated upon the wings of the cherubim in the Holy of Holies. These were local apparitions that, far from identifying the deity with his image or shrine, expressly contrasted him with it. Often, however, the Hebrew prophets themselves were overwhelmed by the force of the senses, and stopped at the precise words of their dramatic dialogues with Jehovah, without transcending to the moral predicaments in their nation that had set that problem and inspired that prophecy. Yet who better than these prophets could hear those footfalls of fate which they turned into such graphic eloquence? Why did it never occur to them that if figures of stone or wood, made by men's hands, were a cheat, figures of rhetoric on men's tongues might be far more subtly and cruelly deceptive?

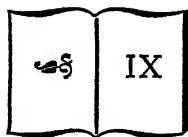
It seems, then, that self-transcendence belongs to the very essence of existence, temporarily, qualitatively, morally, and intellectually.

Existence can be preserved and can live only by transition from phase to phase and tension between part and part. Any protest against transitive knowledge or against self-sacrifice, as if these were contrary to nature, misrepresents the life of nature. But transcendence must not be conceived to abolish continuity. Even temporal self-transcendence presupposes continuity of substance: for if nothing positive passed from moment to moment (as nothing would in geometrical time) each moment would form a universe, and no one of them would be before or after the other. Much more so in the moral and intellectual self-transcendence that interests us here. When attention passes from a fact to an idea, both the psyche thinking and the fact confronted continue to exist: the intuition, which is transparent and self-forgetful, and the essence which is its theme, are elicited by that substantial process and tension beneath, which probably continue beyond. Transcendence and sacrifice thus form a moral accompaniment to a particular cycle in the flux of existence. They do not imply a suicide followed by the inception of a new being. Vital continuity in the psyche is presupposed, carrying personal identity with it. As Christ remains the same person, the Son of God, when he becomes man, so each human soul remains the same soul, no matter what new affections it may develop. Otherwise the development would be a substitution and the exaltation a disappearance. We do not always know what nature has made us capable of becoming. Many a vacillation and disillusion warns us that we are liable to mistake our true vocation, and to fly blindly from our true good. And why should not premonitions of this appointed metanoia not visit us sometimes spontaneously, or be awakened in us by the words and example of prophets, more mature and deeply sensitive than ourselves?

I see no reasonable presumption against this: but the choice of any stage or of any culmination as the right or final state of the spirit is arbitrary and dictated by some particular moral sentiment that has no special authority. So vital feeling or stress takes a

great leap when it forms images, articulate and analysable; and intelligence takes another, doubtless simultaneous, when it transcends these images and posits independent and dynamic objects beneath or beyond them. This is an invaluable progress from the point of view of conduct, the practical arts, and religion, because it adjusts action and sentiment to the real forces on which existence depends. Yet spirit may silently pass on in what might seem the opposite direction when it abandons or despises all this prudential and blind knowledge—blind because it has nothing distinct to offer in the place of the sensuous or poetic images that it transcends—and reverts, now with an enthusiastic worship, to the cult of ideas. Yet it is this step that crowns the life of reason. For what profit is there in discovering the order of nature or the history of mankind except that we may thereby protect and sweeten the transit of the soul through the world, and choose eternal objects of study and love?

The idea of Christ, with the corresponding theory of a supernatural soul in man, puts this conclusion before us in a dramatic myth, where the changed affections of the enlightened spirit are represented as a life lived or to be lived in other worlds. The illusion that may attach to this is innocent and the truth conveyed is important. Yet that element of illusion would cease to be innocent if, instead of uttering the spontaneous aspiration of certain souls, it became a ground for denying positive truths or prohibiting other aspirations. The ladder by which transcendence climbs must not be kicked away from under one's feet; and that a man should remain man is the first condition of God's coming to dwell in him.



CONCLUSION

What meaning may we give to the phrase: God in man? If we use it, as I do in this book, with the idea of Christ before us, we must exclude at once the pantheistic sense of that phrase, which would be that God exists in man because everything is a part of God. Only a part of God, then, could exist in man, and that part would exist in God only because man exists and forms that feature in the totality of being. There would therefore be no reduplication, assimilation, or worship possible towards God; the sublimity of God would be merely quantitative, in that he was infinitely greater and more powerful than man. But man would be, in every respect, an intrinsic part of God, so that God could never create, command or condemn him, nor could man in any sense transcend himself and have more of God in him than his own particular fragment of being. Within these limits, however, man would be as original, free, spontaneous, and self-justified as every other portion of the universe.

Now it is obviously not in this sense that God is in Christ or that Christ offers to come into us with God and to dwell within us. God, for the Jewish tradition, is a power, a will, an individual not composed of parts; he is a spirit and can enter into man only in spirit, that is to say, ideally. For there is spirit in man also; and the peculiarity of spirit is precisely that it can harbour in an image or embrace in intent the whole of any object, even the

whole universe; and therefore also God, who in this cosmology is a part only of the totality of being. God exists in Christ, then, because Christ knows and loves God: and as knowledge and love have degrees, nothing prevents God from entering in some measure into any of us, without obscuring our own integrity, or forfeiting, in his personal being, any degree of his independence. So the mind can review and re-enact its past without robbing the past of its inalienable reality and independent existence; or one mind may understand another, and coincide with it in feeling or opinion, without either lapsing into that other mind or reducing it to a mere idea in some third person who, perhaps ages later, discovers it and agrees with it. This realistic background is proper to monarchical theism. It is also requisite if intelligence is to have any transcendent validity, or idealism any moral function or dignity. For if idealism is turned into a psychological physics or cosmology it becomes merely naturalism disguised in romantic or dialectical myths. Idealism then inspires the same religious sentiments as pantheism and the same morality.

The idea of Christ, however, is not that of an ordinary man who has been more or less inspired by the spirit of God; that might be the Jewish or Mohammedan view of Jesus, or that of some of his disciples before they had discovered who their Master really was. He was really God become man; and that is a very different idea from that of a man living, as far as his nature permits, in an ideal union with God. Nevertheless, it is the model of Christ, not that of the godly man, that inspires the Christian, and that is really adequate to guide a free and heroic spirit. This is the crux of my problem. It is what forced Catholic theology to adopt the doctrine of a supernatural human soul: so that only a sacrificial human life and a sanctified human body should be truly natural to man and compatible with his perfect happiness. This implies the sacrifice of almost everything that a man ordinarily cares for, including his animal will and his animal self.

Can this really be the universal vocation of spirit? I will answer

this question in the honest scholastic way, by a *distinguo*. Spirit may be taken in two ways, in its essence or its instances. In its essence, the vocation of spirit is that of Christ: to be incarnate, to suffer and do what is appointed, and to return, at every recollected moment, to perfect union with God. In its instances, however, the vocation of spirit is different in each soul. In the poet, the artist, or the wit, intelligence and love are disinterested: in so far as they deserve those names, that which lives in them is the liberated spirit. At moments they may touch perfect self-forgetfulness; and no fulfilment can come to the spirit more genuine than that. Moreover, the whole evolution of nature and history is centrifugal, polyglot, reaching incommensurable achievements. Life radiates in every way it finds open, and in each species, in each art, flowers into a different glory. To impose one form, one method, one type of virtue upon every creature would be sheer blindness to the essence of the good. Spirit, then, I reply, has its essence in a single vocation, to reflect the glory of God; but this vocation can be realised only in special and diverse forms. Christ, being God, reflects God's whole glory. For us, also, there is no difference between God entering into us and our attaining our special perfections and reflecting our appointed part of the good.

It is indeed one of the beauties in the idea of Christ that in spite of his absolute holiness, or because of it, he shows a spontaneous sympathy, shocking to the Pharisee, with many non-religious sides of life, with little children, with birds and flowers, with common people, with beggars, with sinners, with sufferers of all sorts, even with devils. This is one of the proofs that natural spirit, not indoctrinated or canalised, was speaking in him. Wherever it peeped, however rudimentary or hidden or contorted it might be, he recognised it, and wished to liberate and draw it out, as far as it would come. Was it not the fate hanging over these poor beginnings or sad frustrations of life that saddened him and carried him first to the desert and at last to the cross? Spirit was everywhere so smothered and tormented that nothing

short of death to this world could save it. It could be saved if it saw that in Christ, with his voluntary Incarnation and Passion, it had its saviour and exemplar. However brief or troubled its career might be, it would be justified if ever the same light touched it that shone in Christ. This was the light of ideal union with God, and all else was vanity.

The prerogative of the idea of Christ to be in this way the light of the spirit, leading it through every other love to the love of God only, will be justified rationally if we can trace the idea of God itself to its roots in the natural life of that very spirit. Now, the idea of God as Lord and Lawgiver represents dramatically the contact of spirit with all external powers. Respect for these powers is wisdom, and Christ in his parables continually teaches us what are the ways of God in the government of the world. Earthly wisdom and virtue will establish our political covenant with God, and will suffice to save us materially. When we pass to the idea of God as Creator and Father what is dramatised is rather the dependence of spirit upon the vital powers that generate it: an agitated and troubled dependence, because not all psychic movements are favourable to spirit, and many a dark passion crosses the inspirations that seem to come by the grace of God. If we are not content with a legal righteousness and the earthly well-being which it promises, if we would be perfect, we must battle against all the forces of our own nature that impede the perfect union of spirit in us with the will of our Creator and Father: a loving will, since he made us because, in idea, he eternally loved us, and a will that is radically also our own, since our spirit was made in his image, and our true happiness can never be found save in his glory.

This idea of God as spirit, loving the spirit in us and realising in himself all that spirit in us looks to as its supreme good, is evidently *prophetic*; that is, it sees in a vision as an accomplished fact, though hidden from vulgar apprehension, a secret ideal of the heart, and helps to render that ideal clearer and more communicable.

Thus the enigmatic presence of God in man signifies the same thing as holiness, or the complete triumph of spirit over the other elements of human nature. And this presence of God, far from destroying those other elements, presupposes them, as it does in Christ, and merely coordinates and purifies them, so that they may be perfect instruments and not impediments for the spirit. This is strongly expressed in the inspired notion that Christ, being God, positively chose to assume a human body and a human psyche. Spirit could not otherwise have had a history. The idea of Christ thus represents the intrinsic ideal of spirit; that is to say, the acme of disinterested intelligence and disinterested love.

All these considerations might seem inconclusive and contradictory if one final point were not understood. The life of spirit, being natural, is contingent; it cannot be anything obligatory. It was not a duty for matter to produce life, nor is it a duty for life to produce spirit. For the most part these transitions do not occur, and the universe rolls on in a peace it does not enjoy towards catastrophes it does not expect. But life when it has arisen begins to pursue certain contingencies and to tremble at others; and spirit inherits this moral and dramatic sensibility. Yet its own impulse is to transcend that agitation. When conflicting movements divide the psyche and would destroy each other, the spirit, being hostile to nothing, feels the suasion of both and triumphs if they manage to unite in a relative euphoria and harmony. But not all souls love harmony. Harmony involves sacrifice, and vital passions will not endure it. If they did, their objects would be transformed. They would become themes for the spirit, moving in the magnetic field of the truth, where all things are eternally pictured. That is the realm that spirit looks out upon from the beginning. For spirit is addressed to qualitative being, such as pure attention would discover in every image of sense, in every feeling, in every event: the eternal essence of that image, of that feeling, of that event. This is what poetry, painting, and history arrest and preserve. But attention is seldom or never pure; it is distracted by the irrelevant

abundance of blind excitements and the feebleness of its own light. And the automatism of life in most men thirsts for irrelevant excitements, not finding much joy in anything definite and true to itself.

The idea of Christ crucified has had many worshippers, and has inspired many saints. But it has not converted the world or saved it. The world does not wish to be saved. If we say that the world thereby wills its own damnation, we are merely venting our private displeasure, without frightening the world. The flux of existence cannot be stopped by reflection, save as it has partially stopped already to make that reflection. To stop may well seem to it a worse damnation than never to be able to stop. But in fact life is not condemned to either fate, because materially it always passes on, but in spirit it sometimes transcends into realisation of the eternal. There is aesthetic delight in this, as well as moral peace and intellectual clearness; but those who miss these things do not regret missing them. It would not be in the spirit of Christ to blame them for that privation: verily they have their reward. Yet that reward, from the spiritual point of view, is itself their punishment, for it keeps them from ever understanding the power of their own minds or judging anything otherwise than by an accidental passion.

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